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Rosamond



S. S. Fleming
from her Godmother
W^m Freeman

1837.



M^r. Freeman—

From M^r. Watson

Rosamund,

&c. &c.

1911

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Rosamund,
COUNTESS OF CLARENSTEIN.

I see what you are ; you are too proud,
But if you were the Devil, you are fair.
Twelfth Night, or What you Will.

Tu legasti il Cor mio con mille nodi
Tu'l formasti di nuovo ; e poi che fui
Gentil fatto per te,—rompesti i Lacci.

Lorenzo.
de' Med.
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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V. 1

PREFACE.

IT was to employ agreeably some leisure hours, that I traced this picture of my imagination. In its completion I had no higher ambition, than to present it to those friends, who honor me by their partial kindness ; and my sole motive for sending

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it to the Press, was to facilitate their perusal of it. I do not desire that its circulation should be indiscriminately extended beyond the limits of their indulgent criticism, for I have not the folly or the presumption, to imagine it worthy of being submitted to that of the Public, the severity of whose judgment I have no right to expect would be tempered by the same kindness for the Author. I do not therefore aspire to honors, the justice of which I should myself be so much dis-

posed to doubt.—Acting with the same candor, I must equally acknowledge, that I am far from insensible to the opinion of those, who profess to have received pleasure from the perusal of Rosamund: accustomed from my earliest years, by looking up to the high example before me, to venerate truth, I cannot suspect others, and least of all those whom I esteem, of having in this instance dealt insincerely by me. I have thus been induced to dismiss it from its secure retreat; but it has not

been without some reluctance, and 'thus
to my thought, I said,

'If ye will roam, go; but remember you were
safer at home.'

Rosamund.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

IT was a beautiful morning in the month of May, that two Cavaliers, passing arm in arm through one of the great squares of the city of Vienna, stopped before the gates of a palace belonging to the Duke of Rhonberg. Observing that the court-yard was filled with horses and carriages ; and every preparation announcing an immediate departure :

‘ I wonder where the Duke is going,’ said one of the Cavaliers ; ‘ I shall inquire.’ So saying

he touched the bell at the great gate: the porter appeared;

‘Is the Duke going into the country?’ He inquired.

‘His Grace is setting out for Rhonberg.’

‘Does he make any stay there?’

‘It is uncertain.’

‘Does he go alone?’

‘My Lady Duchess, and his two sons accompany his Grace.’

‘And the Countess of Clarenstein?’ asked the second Cavalier.

‘I believe that the Countess goes likewise with the Duke.’

‘Make our compliments to the Duke, and say that we came to call on him, but will not now detain him.’

The porter bowed. ‘I shall take care to inform his Grace,’ he answered. The gates closed, and the Cavaliers proceeded slowly on their way.

‘Thank heaven!’ exclaimed the second Cavalier, ‘Vienna will now rest in peace since that sorceress is going. One may breathe for a month without inhaling some one or other of her spells.’

‘ Ah rather say that Vienna will now be a desert. There is no air worth breathing but that, which the divine Clarenstein inhales.’

‘ If I were Emperor,’ rejoined the first, ‘ I would give her a lettre de cachet. She is enough to drive the whole city out of their senses. I do not believe that there is a man in it except myself in possession of his right reason.’

‘ Are you quite certain that you are not making a vain boast ?’

The Cavalier laughed, ‘ When the enemy is not at hand one takes the opportunity of being very brave. But by all that is ominous,’ exclaim-

ed he, suddenly turning his head, ‘ Here she comes !’

The great gates of the hotel were thrown open, and forth there issued a princely pomp. The Duke was on horseback, by the side of the Landau, which contained the Duchess of Rhonberg, her two boys, and the peerless Clarenstein. The Cavaliers lifted their hats: the salutation was returned by the noble company. The gallant retinue passed rapidly on; a troop of attendants closed the scene, and shut it from the view of the Cavaliers. The street became quiet as before, and the passengers passed on their way.

‘ Did you see that smile?’ said at length he who had boasted of his reason.

"Did you see the hand?" asked the other.

"What is there about that enormous hand which
she can find her finger on the dot?"

"The hand of her mother in herself. It was
never to be."

"Yes to me."

"I suppose that she did not mean it for either
of us."

"Oh no! I trust her good soul for taking
special care not to do any thing half so good
as"

"There is not a woman in Europe who knows"

ROSAMUND.

how to kiss her hand with half the grace that she does.'

'We may as well go and bury ourselves alive, hang, drown, or stab. . . . What is there here worth living for?'

What at length these Cavaliers who, by their own confession, were not in possession of the right senses, determined to do that day with the persons, must remain unknown. We must follow the steps of the fair sorceress.

How often does the magnificence which surrounds the great raise the sigh of envy in the passing observer! How often as their costly equipages sweep the streets of the capital do the young and inexperienced exclaim, 'How happy

must they be !' Oh fond, and credulous judgment ! The pomp, which, like a veil, surrounds the great, serves but to keep the anxious spirit, the aching heart, from view. They, in return, as they pass by the homely, but peaceful cottage of the peasant, exclaim, ' how happy must they be !' There is some French author who in speaking of the false conceptions frequently entertained of the superior happiness of the great, says, ' Dans tous les Palais des Grands il y a un Cabinet de douleur.' A secret chamber where the sighs and tears of suffering humanity are paid as offerings to the shrine of that sorrow, which is more or less the lot of all created beings.

But if ever there existed an exception to this universal law of suffering and pain, it was to be found in the palace of the Duke of Rhonberg ;

and if, as his carriage swept the streets of the Capital any sigh was breathed of, 'how happy must they be!' it was no fond and credulous judgment, for in that fair company as much of nobleness, wealth, and beauty was to be found, as the world in all its wide extent could produce. The castle of Rhonberg was situated at the distance of a day's journey from Vienna. I shall pass over the occurrences of the journey 'till towards evening, when they rested at a village for a relay of horses. The Duke rode up to the Landau, and said, 'I wish that you would take me in.'

'With all my heart, my dear Lord,' replied the Duchess, but what then must I do with these sweet boys who are charming company.'

‘ Oh yes, we are so happy,’ cried the elder, ‘ Eugene and I, we cannot go away, Mamma says that we keep her awake, we are such merry little things—so we can’t go, you know!’

‘ Oh if that is all, Duchess,’ cried the Duke, ‘ I will promise to keep you awake. Come you little rebels, get down. Such merry grigs as you may live and laugh any where!’

So saying, the Duke opened the door of the landau, and, after tenderly embracing her sons, the Duchess told her attendants to place them in the carriage with her women. The Duke took his place, and the carriage went on.

The road became more mountainous as they proceeded. At length, after descending for more

than a mile a steep declivity, a sudden turn in the road gave to view the open plains of Rhonberg, and its castle, which rose like a fair enchantment on the sight, with its lofty spires glittering in the setting sun.

‘ Ah,’ exclaimed the Duke, ‘ there is Rhonberg. My lady and sister,’ continued he, bending towards the Countess of Clarenstein, ‘ throw your dark eye over that scene of beauty, and say can you for a short season inhabit there ?’

It was indeed a scene of beauty. Between two lofty mountains, whose sides were clothed with forest trees, a rich and verdant plain extended itself. Half concealed amid embowering groves, stood the village of Rhonberg. Through the plain ran a broad and placid river, on whose

sloping banks stood the ruins of an ancient monastery, partially hid by groupes of trees, whose broad foliage, extending itself in various directions, formed masses of shade, secret bowers, which the eye loved, yet half feared to penetrate. At some distance higher up the plain, a bridge was thrown across the river, and at the upper end, commanding the view of this beauteous scene, stood the castle of Rhonberg. It was of Gothic architecture; but not of that construction which presents to the imagination the idea of rugged strength and savage grandeur able to sustain and repel the attack of hostile force. But rather did it seem to be a princely residence where love might be well pleased to hold his court, and act his gay enchantments.

Such did it appear to the Lady Rosamund, as,

in obedience to her brother's command, she threw her dark eye on the vale of Rhonberg. 'I thought you told me that you were bringing me into a desert! Do you call this one?' asked the Countess.

'I said so,' replied the Duke, 'because I thought that to you who have lived all your life in courts and palaces, even such an Arcadia as this might wear the aspect of a desert.' For here are no knights; and my peasants are homely rustics, who neither dance, nor speak love in Italian, nor tie their hair with rose-colored ribbons as yours do at the opera. Here are no refinements on pastoral life. Nay,' cried the Duke, laughing, 'at this very moment I am ready to apologise for the ill manners of my mountain winds which blow in your face, and

disorder your ringlets with as little ceremony as if you were a ruddy mountaineer! What would the Court Zephyrs say to this insolent freedom, who come laden with rich perfumes from jessamine bowers, and orange groves, and always have the art to blow a lady's drapery about, in the most graceful disorder that she could desire.' Lady Clarenstein unveiled her beauteous forehead to let the breeze play at its pleasure round the finest head that ever was seen. 'There is something very diverting in the assurance of your country-bred zephyrs,' said she, 'I am not certain whether their audacity will not win my favor extremely.'

'True woman!' exclaimed the Duke; 'they who would win your favor would do well boldly to defy your anger.'

‘It is now just six years ago,’ went on the Duke, looking at the Duchess, ‘that we travelled together this road, in just such a heavenly evening. Dost thou remember it, lady of my soul?’

‘Do I remember it? My Lord Duke is not so much in love, as he was then.’

‘And my Lady Duchess not quite so ill at her ease,’ retorted the Duke archly, ‘I remember how you drove me to despair with your monosyllables, and your persisting in calling me, My Lord, and your always looking out of the opposite window, in order to avoid seeing me.’

‘Had you quarrelled?’ asked Lady Rosamund.

‘We were just married,’ said the Duke; ‘but Hermione seemed at that time to regard it with exactly the same horror she would have done, had she been going to that fair castle yonder to be buried alive.’

‘Oh, I did not know,’ returned the Countess, ‘that it was a forced marriage. I thought that it had been an affair of love.’

‘On *my* part,’ replied the Duke.

‘I do not understand you: Hermione, what does he mean? And why are your blue eyes filled with tears? Nay, the Duke too looks as if _____

‘My dear Lord,’ said the Duchess, giving

him both her hands, 'shall we tell Rosamund how near we were being very miserable?'

'Yes—for I perceive that she is all amazement—but do justice to yourself, or———'

'Fear not—I will do justice to myself, for only thus can I do justice to the most beloved of men.'

After a moment's pause, during which the Duchess passed her white fingers over her eyes to clear them from the tears which hung on their lids, she turned towards her sister, and thus addressed her.

'Know then, my sweet sister, that the day which united me to your brother, was beheld by

me with sorrow and apprehension, and when we drove through the gates of Vienna, and I found myself on the road with the Duke by my side, surrounded by every thing which love and magnificence could assemble to charm the fancy of a bride of sixteen, I only wept, as if I had been sacrificed. The Duke increased my confusion, for he seemed to consider my conduct as natural enough in an inexperienced girl just emerged from the walls of a convent, and the raillery which he used to restore my spirits, only the more disconcerted me. But on his calling me ‘beautiful child,’ and asking me whether he should ‘catch those butterflies to amuse me,’ I instantly dried up my tears, and seeing myself treated as a child, I grew the more convinced that the Duke considered me as a pretty play-thing which he could govern at his pleasure. I, on my part,

regarded him as a cold, selfish tyrant, who would never consult my happiness except so far as his own was concerned ; one who would take advantage of every confidence or developement of character that I should make before him, in order hereafter to thwart and control me—that he would seek with subtlety to win on my affection in order to turn my own weapons against me, and at length so to enslave my mind that I should have neither thought nor will, but as he should suggest. ‘Forgive me, my dear Lord,’ said the Duchess, casting her blue eyes with inexpressible tenderness on the Duke, ‘forgive me if I so slandered you—for it was thus, that from my youth they had counseled me to consider men. The more graceful and worthy to be loved, that you appeared to me, the more did I esteem it a duty to steel my heart against you.

But in this I suffered incessant torment,' continued the Duchess, again addressing herself to Lady Clarenstein, 'how often has the Duke's demeanor, so commanding, yet so gay, charmed my youthful fancy, when I seemed wholly unimpressed by the graces of his person. How often when I thought it politic to be grave, did his joyous laugh animate my naturally buoyant spirits, till I could have danced and sung from mere hilarity of feeling. I regarded every testimony of his attachment to me as a snare, and every pleasure which his magnificence lavished on me, as baits to betray me into a discovery of what the turn of my disposition was, that he might the better know how to counteract me in every thing. In a word, never was there such tenderness, and such a profusion of delights so cast away on a

‘Marble statue,’ exclaimed the Duke, taking up the narrative, ‘indeed never was man so perplexed with a bride of sixteen as I was; for my sweet sister must think that I soon ceased to attribute to a girlish folly the behaviour of the Duchess to me. Cold, reluctant, ever on her guard, as it were, against me, I believed myself disliked, nay more than disliked, hated. I knew that Hermione was naturally gay, and had high spirits—To say nothing of catching butterflies, I had seen her as full of merriment and fancies as the veriest buffa in existence, but now I saw nothing but gravity, and smiles which were not the smiles of the heart. She had sensibility I knew, but she now seemed insensible to every thing. Whatever I proposed met with her instant compliance, but compliance that wounded every

generous feeling of my soul : it said so clearly ‘you are master,’ that I would have given the world that I had married a shrew, whom, at least, if I could not please, I could displease. Often I conjured her to let me know how I could please or divert her ; nay, I even questioned her women if they could instruct me, but in vain. ‘She had no choice ; it was as I pleased.’ ‘She had every thing that she desired.’ At length disheartened, and not a little mortified, I began to suspect that she possessed one thing that she did not wish for, and that was myself. By good luck the pain which I endured from this suspicion, the disgust which I felt at having become the gaoler and tyrant of the woman I loved, offences for which I never had either the talent or the taste, so confounded me, that they threw me into a fever.’

‘ Ah, then,’ cried the Duchess, ‘ you were well avenged ! Never shall I forget the pain I felt when, from the wild ravings of your delirium, I gathered, how great had been the error of my conduct. I heard my name a thousand time repeated—Oh, how repeated ! Never shall I forget the moment of the Duke waking after a slumber of some hours long desired in vain by his physicians. It was in the dead of the night ; his attendants, fatigued with watching, were sunk in sleep ; I sat by the bed-side sick with terror, and not daring even to hope. At length he moved, and the first words that he uttered assured me that his senses were returned. I threw myself on my knees, and silently blessed heaven for the favorable symptom. The Duke asked for something to drink—I answered not, for in his delirium he had often repulsed my

offered assistance, and the sight of me had seemed so powerfully to disturb him that the physicians had counseled me to forbear appearing before him. So I spoke not, but filling a glass with some beverage, I held it to him. His eyes were cast down, and he took the glass from my hand. But my tears betrayed me. He raised his eyes upon me—oh never shall I forget that look; never, the faint pressure of that arm which he cast round my waist, nor the voice in which he ‘thanked me for my kindness,’ that voice would have won my soul from death. Then followed incoherent, broken words that went like daggers to my soul. The Duke declared that he ‘died with the less regret since he was not beloved by me.’ What happened then I scarcely know. I believed that the Duke was dying—the horror of never having it in my power to undeceive him so

pressed on my soul that I fell on that noble breast in an agony of despair and remorse : and what I said I know not.'

The Duchess paused. The sacred emotion bereft her of words. The Duke a thousand times kissed her hands and said, ' Since that hour all has been we''.'

' This,' cried the Duke more gaily, ' was the romance of our marriage, Rosamund. It had nearly been a tragedy. Since that time my Lady Duchess has found a will of her own, and is no longer the " marble statue."'

This interesting communication had so beguiled the time, that the travellers observed not that they were within a short distance of the village of

Rhonberg, where a scene awaited them not calculated to repress the softened feelings which it had awakened in their hearts.

The servants who preceded the carriage, being questioned by the peasants, spread the intelligence of the Duke's approach. The country was all in motion. Joy and surprise seemed every where to prevail. From every cottage, groupes of peasants were seen issuing, and a thousand confused cries were heard of 'It is the Duke, it is our good Lord.' Every voice uttered a blessing, or a welcome, as they passed. The old men, seated at their cottage-doors taking their evening's repast, would rise as they saw the noble company approach, and bowing low, as they lifted the cup to their lips, would drink prosperity to the house of Rhonberg. The children left their

sports to gaze on them with delighted eyes ; the young girls would run from the beechen shade, where the rustic dance was forming, to scatter at the feet of the horses the flowers with which their bosoms were adorned. The minstrel broke off his rustic air, and his fingers rested suspended on the oaten pipe—nay, the very youths who throughout the tedious day had sighed for the evening hour, now left the story of their love untold, to bound over the fields, or spring from the heights into the road, to meet the carriage as it passed. Thus in rural triumphs, with sensations sweeter far than the most courtly honors could inspire, did the Duke pass through the fair vale of Rhonberg, till, on entering the village, the crowd of people became so great that the horses could with difficulty proceed. With a roughness not unusual with the attendants of the

great, the grooms endeavoured to disperse the honest peasants. The Duke observed it, and in a tone of loud displeasure called out to them to 'stand.'

Then the people hung, as it were, on the carriage-wheels, and every gracious inclination of the head, every smile of the Duke's, were followed by a rapturous cry of 'long live the Duke, and his lovely Duchess!'

The Duchess drew off her veil, and with moistened eyes, cast on the people a smile worthy of an angel. Her lovely bosom heaved gently beneath the lawn which covered it, and her lips half unclosed softly murmured 'God bless the Duke.' Sweet incense which his ear alone received, and his heart in secret cherished. Turn-

ing towards the peasants with that dignity, that was tempered with the most benign sweetness, he said, ‘ My good friends, these marks of your attachment are very grateful to me : it assures me that you are happy, and I rejoice to find peace and prosperity in the vale of Rhonberg.’

An old and venerable peasant then spoke in these words, ‘ Most noble Sir, Rhonberg is indeed blessed with happiness and peace :—it is to you, next to heaven, that we owe the blessing. We have sighed, we have longed, to see this day, that we might heap blessings on your honored head—for there is not a heart in Rhonberg that has not cause to bless you.

Here a confused number of voices at once called out, 'He says true, noble Sir! every heart in Rhonberg blesses you.'

The Duke was somewhat moved. He uncovered his head for a moment, and bowed. 'I thank every heart here, for the expression of its honest gratitude. But no acts of mine towards yourselves deserve this excess of homage.'

'O Sir, they do,' exclaimed the old man who had spoken before. 'Last winter was a dreadful one: our fields were inundated and laid waste: our habitations were destroyed by frightful storms: our cattle perished by hundreds. The sick and the aged must have perished too, but for you—you forgave our rents—nourished and supported us—supplied the loss that we had sustained;

and in a word gave us new life. But for you, we could not have weathered that dreadful year. May God prosper the house of Rhonberg. Ye are a blessing to this land.' The old man passed his hand across his eyes, bowed his head, and was silent.

...The Duke, with that chaste eloquence with which, on all occasions, he expressed himself, now assured them of his protection, and of the satisfaction that he felt at their happiness.

'And now, my good friends,' said he, 'let the carriage pass!'

Several voices called out at once, 'Noble Sir, we understand that the young lords, your sons, are in that carriage. If it please you to let us see them, we will depart satisfied.'

The Duke commanded that his sons should be brought to him. The fair children, conscious and half-pleased at the honors paid them, yet somewhat timid at the sight of such a concourse of people, stood like two angels stolen from heaven, at the feet of the Duke and Duchess.

‘ This,’ cried the Duke, ‘ is my eldest born. He bears my name. Destined to be the heir of these fair domains, he shall early be taught to respect the sacred claims of humanity, and to reverence yours.’

‘ May God preserve him,’ cried the people, ‘ he is a princely boy.’

The Duke took off his son’s hat, and the fair child bowed his head with a sort of mimic majesty that he inherited from his father.

‘And this,’ said the Duke, taking the young Eugene in his arms, ‘is the youngest jewel of my house. A merry boy; and as you see, the gracious image of his mother.’

The young Eugene, without waiting to be told, pulled off his cap with an infantine grace, and nodded his head, rich with golden curls, with so bewitching a sweetness, that the enraptured people were wild with suppressed delight, and the Duke laughed aloud. The beautiful boy cast his eyes on a young peasant girl, who wore in her breast a nosegay of wild flowers, he looked for some time wistfully at them, then turning to the Duke, he pointed to the flowers, and lisping said, ‘dey are so pretty ones.’

The young peasant heard him, and timidly presented the flowers to the fair boy, who grasped them with delight, and held them out to his mother, that she might look at them.

‘What do you give her for them?’ asked the Duke.

‘Me have nothing.’

The Duchess untied from her waist a rich blue ribbon, and gave it to Eugene, who, leaning on the Duke’s arm over the carriage, held out the gay streamer to the young peasant, who hesitated, embarrassed at the honor.

‘Look here,’ said Eugene, ‘dere is mamma’s sath for you. Do you ike it?’

‘Take it, my child,’ said the Duke.

The girl took the ribbon, and while the peasants in a transport of delight at the courteous action, threw up their caps, and made the air resound with their joy, the Duke gave a sign to his people to proceed, and the gay pageant passed on rapidly.

It was dusk when they arrived at Rhonberg, and the noble company who had in silence passed the remainder of the journey they had to make, broke not from their reveries till the carriage stopped beneath the lofty portico. They descended, and the fair Rosamund found herself in the enchanted castle. Supper was laid in a hall, one side of which was open to the air, and through the light Gothic arches brightly illuminated, the whole vale of Rhonberg was seen.

The moon hung like a fair lamp in the clear heavens : her silver rays chastened into pensive beauty every object which before had been so brilliant, and cast over the woods masses of light and shade. The village lay in profound repose, and not a sound issued thence to disturb the sweet tranquillity.

The Duchess had left the hall to attend the supper of her children. Lady Clarenstein, enchanted with the beauty that surrounded her, stood leaning against a pillar of the arcade. The Duke came up, and casting his arm around her slender waist, said affectionately, ‘ My sweet Rosamund, what think you of Rhonberg ? Is it to your taste ?’

‘ ’Tis an Arcadia ; and your peasants, brother, though they do not speak love in Italian, speak

most eloquently the language of the heart in bad German. Those "vivat" that they bestowed on you and the Duchess, gave me a sweeter sensation than all the intonations of that recitative I love so much.'

'It was the grand pastoral after the Comédie larmoyante, that the Duchess gave us in the carriage. I think that the air of Rhonberg is favorable to romance. What think you, Contessa, of making a third part of the romance already begun. You are just the sort of thing for a lady of romance.'

'What character shall I play?'

'What think you of Armida?'

'Ah, elle est trop coquette!'

‘ Pas trop,’ said the Duke, shrugging up his shoulders.

‘ Clorinda then ?’

‘ I am no Amazon, brother.’

‘ Angelica bella ?’

‘ Mais fi donc, mon frere. Do you think that I could love a little curly-headed page ?’

‘ Amarillide ?’

‘ Elle est trop bergère.’

‘ Oriana ? There are whims and caprices enough to suit any woman.’

‘ I should like that. But *le grand sérieux* d’Amadis would disconcert me. I think that I had better make a romance in my own name.’

‘ Ah,’ cried the Duke emphatically, ‘ that you will do, I doubt not. But here comes the Duchess. Well, my Cornelia, how do the young Gracchi ?’

‘ Well and happy. Asleep, I believe, by this time ;’ the Duchess answered.

‘ Then, perhaps, you will allow us to have some supper.’

And now, gentle reader, while sleep closes her fair eyes, suffer me to present before you the portrait of the beauteous sister of the Duke.

CHAPTER II.

ROSAMUND, Countess of Clarenstein, was half-sister, by a second marriage, to the Duke of Rhonberg. Her mother died in giving her birth, and her titles and estates devolved upon the lovely infant who became the idol of her father. It might with truth be said of her, that she was cradled in the lap of luxury and greatness. The voice of tenderness alone met her infant ear, and unbounded indulgence from the hour of her birth had prevented her every wish.

Never, indeed, was there an object more formed by nature to excite enthusiastic fondness in a parent's heart, nor one on whom could be lavished with more graceful effect, every refinement which education could invent, to exalt and cherish natural graces. Had the whole imperial Court of Fairies presided at her christening, she could not have been more proudly gifted. Her infancy was an eternal smile, her youth a tissue of ever-varying pleasures, 'till the age of fifteen, when her father was taken from her by death. He left the young heiress to the protection of a maternal aunt, who resided in Hungary. With her she remained, 'till, at the expiration of two years, death a second time robbed her of a tender friend. The Duke her brother being then married, she returned to Vienna, and lived with him and the Duchess on terms of the greatest confidence and friendship.

The Duke next to idolised his sister, and her future happiness was the wish nearest his heart. He saw with pain that there existed in her character a powerful defect: a defect which the Duke justly apprehended would fatally influence her future destiny: but the Countess of Clarenstein was one of those women whose very faults have so winning a grace in them, that they make austerity itself less austere. In her absence, the Duke's judgment saw much to reprehend; but in her presence, he felt nothing but a tender admiration of her uncommon graces, and her rich variety of powers, to adorn the world in which she was to move. This attachment on the part of the Duke to his sister, was returned by her with a degree of respect and honor that could not be surpassed.

The person of the young Countess was tall and slender ; and never did the genius of a Phidias or a Praxiteles give to the sculptured image of a virgin Goddess proportions more exquisitely harmonious. O'er all her form—

“ the Graces
From their sacred alabaster vase,
Shed that blest unguent which to all her limbs
(Accordant to proportion's faultless law)
Gave new dimensions, only seen before
In shapes of heavenly frame.”

But it was impossible to characterise the peculiar sort of grace which animated her form : its endless variety baffled all description. It might be said of her, that her every feature knew, as it were, the extent and the diversity of its

power, and by turns employed them all to dazzle and betray. Her beauty was of so rare and exquisite a kind, that all other forms seemed ordinary in the comparison. Her complexion, though tinged with the hue of health, was so fair, so unblemished, so brilliant in its delicacy, that you might have thought that it was the statue of some vestal virgin, over whose fair cheek, Love had not dared to lay his roseate tints. Her large black eyes were more commanding than tender in their expression, except when "the fringed curtains of her eyes advancing," they for a moment rested on an object dear to her heart, and then an exquisite softness escaped, as it were, from them, and told the penetrating observer, that in that proud form of beauty, a treasure of yet unborn sweetness lay hid. She had the finest dark hair in the world, which she usually confined beneath a cap

or fillet of gold net-work, which, with classic simplicity, designated the fine outline of her head. On each white temple lay a cluster of ringlets, which shaded with modest grace a brow of incomparable majesty, and gave it an air of effeminate delicacy. Every action and movement of her person was living grace. Her step was light and firm. The air with which she presented herself was a strange mixture of aristocratic grace and virgin sweetness, that you doubted whether it were more commanding or bewitching. Her voice was clear and full; but it was not impassioned. She spoke with an eloquence that seized attention rather than penetrated the heart. Nay, oftentimes there was something, in the tones of her voice, that almost bordered on disdain—but her wondrous powers overmastered reason, and made even caprice seem to wear an angel's face.

Such in person and in charms, was the young Countess of Clarenstein. Her character was not altogether so faultless: it was yet unformed. She possessed the germ of every thing that was excellent in the female character, but the circumstances of her life had not been of that nature which call forth the exercise of the exalted virtues. Education tended rather to develop talents, and the lighter endowments of the mind than those moral qualities which form character. Her mind was richly cultivated, and she possessed all those graces of talent and of taste, which give a brilliant charm to society, and constitute the enchanting friend and mistress. Perpetual adulation had not succeeded in corrupting one of the finest natural tempers in the world. She was neither petulant nor capricious nor exacting, in her intercourse with her family. She had retained

much of candor, much of liberality, in her sentiments respecting herself and others, and she had none of those little passions which disturb the peace of society, and embitter social life. But adulation had in her nourished one fatal master passion, till it became the governing principle of her conduct. Never in any female breast did the love of power reign with more despotic sway than in hers. Nature and art had equally combined to make her the delight of all beholders, and in that rich variety of graces which it has already been observed she possessed, she found but too facile a means of engaging all hearts. The grave, the gay, the austere, the luxurious, all equally felt and acknowledged the influence of her uncommon graces. She took a strange delight in encouraging the dawnings of a new-born passion : its progress amused her fancy : to excite

hope and fear, pain and delight in a heart which she knew to be all her own, was her joy, the occupation of her days. Her conquest once secured, she either with unfeminine insolence derided the pain which she gave, or listened with a profound and unfeeling indifference to reproaches, prayers, expostulations. They were incense to her self-love, and uninterrupted success in the exertion of her influence began now to render it at once habitual and necessary to her enjoyment of life. No rival beauty could contest with her. Assured of success, she became at once careless of those already enslaved, and at the same time eager after fresh conquests.

Giri un sguarda,

Mille costringe a impallidir; sorrida,

Sforza mille altri a sospirar; s'avvede

Del suo poter, se ne compiace, e mentre

A dilatar l'impero

Attende, sol del fasto suo ripiena.

Such was the Lady Clarenstein. A proud, imperious, unfeeling coquetry cast a shade over the finest diamond that nature ever produced or art polished. It kept back the secret treasure of her finest qualities, and by slow degrees poisoned that sweet submissive grace of thought and feeling, which is a woman's greatest charm.

Nothing was more delicate, more insidious, than her coquetry: nothing could be in more perfect taste than the deluding blandishments which she employed to ensnare an unsuspecting heart, or soften one ready to escape from her chains: but she dishonored both her taste

and her delicacy in making them act as ministers to her pride and insatiable desire of universal admiration. Yet never perhaps in the character of a coquette did a prouder principle of female honor reside. The very wiles that she used, had an air of elevation in them which shielded the delicacy of her honor from all aspersion.

She had not resided six months with the Duke her brother, ere his penetration discovered with regret, and a disapprobation that he did not conceal, this ruling defect in her disposition. She listened to all his remonstrances with a sweetness and a deference to his opinions that often disarmed the poignancy of his censures.

‘You make,’ would the Duke sometimes say, a wild waste of those enchanting powers with

which nature endowed you to inspire a noble and a lasting passion ; those powers which should be used to animate and engage one only object, you exercise on beings who are either unworthy to touch your heart, or who at least have not the power to do it. Is this noble, is it delicate? you profane the virgin bloom, if I may so express myself, of your smiles, your looks, your graceful endearing arts, by a too indiscriminate exertion of their influence ; and you will lose that refined grace, that sweet austere reserve of a virgin heart, which to him whom you shall hereafter love would be a treasure of delicate price.'

' Him whom I shall love!' repeated the young Countess with a disdainful smile.

‘ I understand you.—No one, you think, can deserve your heart—you are too proud, Contessa.’ ‘ I am far from thinking that no one can deserve it. But I never yet saw a man whom I should chuse to call master. The servile puppets who smile or sigh as I command, are not of that race divine, which shall charm me. Would you have me lower my flight to sparrows and starlings? I will only do that to a royal eagle.

‘ The man to whom I will lay down my crown and sceptre, shall be one who is worthy to wear it. I must have a soul of honor—a mind full of dignity, sense, power, and authority :—a man in one word, Constantine, who shall resemble you ;’ and so saying the young Countess, with a grace irresistible, bent her head to the Duke. He smiled, and he pressed his lips on the fair

forehead which so sweetly inclined itself towards him. 'Contessa mia,' said he, 'not even that sweet action shall prevent me from observing to you, that such a man is of all others the one who will least accommodate himself to a coquette wife.'

The young Countess blushed, and her eyes seemed to say 'you are severe.' The Duke continued. 'What can we augur of noble or exalted in her future conduct, when we see the patrician virgin casting her spells around her like an enchantress? Can a youth so passed educate the mind for the lofty and severe virtues of the Roman matron? Be warned, my sister. Your taste is yet uncorrupted—you are yet capable of loving and appreciating in man what is truly great. But take care lest the wild indulgence

of a lawless thirst of power do not at length tarnish the chaste simplicity of all your feelings, and so estrange the light of truth from your mind, that you can no longer distinguish the truly great in character,—till truth, and honor, and nobility of feeling cease to have charms powerful enough in your eyes to make you resign with grace and sweetness of temper, that frivolous incense which now intoxicates your pride without awakening your sensibility !'

The effect which such arguments as these produced in the mind of the youthful Countess, was powerful but transient : and the Duke forbore to repeat what was so fruitless in producing reform. He resolved to wait patiently till her own ripened reason should of itself work that change his arguments failed to effect in her disposition.

But what then shall tame this wild indifference? Love has sworn to do it. The sighs and groans of her prostrate slaves have reached his ear and roused his jealous honor. He makes ready his formidable bow, he tries his pointed darts. 'Are these powerful enough?' whispers the God. He hesitates. He contemplates the beauteous enemy and becomes thoughtful; again he essays their points. He is dubious of their force—he invents new and more potent spells—he breathes on them an exquisite and insidious fire. Thus prepared he spreads on the buoyant air his purple wings, and directs his flight to the vale of Rhonberg. Ah beauteous Clarenstein, thou unconscious of the impending danger, disportest thyself in airy levity! Yet a few days, enjoy thy wild disdainful liberty. Wander free as air, through the open plains of Rhonberg, and press with thy light foot

the fresh springing flowers. Mount the eastern hill ; present thyself before the throne of the rising sun, and let his first beams salute the most rare and most perfect pattern of nature's works ! Enjoy thy reign, press into the rapid hour every delight with which nature and thy own happy state surround thee, for soon a proud enchanter will appear, whose hand shall waken in that cold bosom a chord that sounds alike to agony and joy.

“ But see !

The morn in russet mantle clad

Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill.”

Already the sun's first beams gild the tall spires of the castle ; I see the silken curtains of the Lady Rosamund's chamber undrawn. Let us

depart, lest we too, rashly gazing, become enamored of those bright eyes which uncloze like another Aurora to spread around gladness and joy.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

A FEW days were spent by this noble company in a retirement that left them nothing to wish for—every delight that taste could procure was at their command, and perhaps there is no life more enchanting than that in which the ease and simplicity of the pastoral, is illustrated and adorned by the graces of artificial manners. What is it that, in the pictures of the Arcadian age; so delights

the fancy? Is it not the union of elegance with natural manners which without banishing simplicity, the ground-work of true beauty of every kind, gives a shade of grace and elevation to the most ordinary and simple actions and feelings of every-day intercourse. This union is however as chimerical as an Arabian night's tale. Where is now to be seen the grace of nature united to the grace of art?

One evening the Duke proposed to walk to some distance up the river where there stood the beautiful remains of an ancient tower. The Duchess assented. 'And you Contessa,' said he to his sister. She excused herself. She had a slight head-ache—She did not feel heroine enough that evening to walk four miles. 'I will,' continued she, 'wait your return here, and when it

is cooler, and the moon is risen, I will, if you like it, walk with you in the beech grove. Duchess, will you leave Eugene with me?' The Duchess smiled assent: the Duke tenderly kissing his sister's forehead, and recommending her to repose and her own fair thoughts, departed with the Duchess and his eldest son.

When they were gone, the Lady Clarenstein placed herself on a couch by the window, whose golden lattices opened on a lofty terrace. There amidst clusters of roses and orange flowers, golden cages were hung filled with the most beautiful foreign birds. The breeze came from thence loaded with a thousand odors, a soft light stole on waves of purple through the rose-colored curtains of the saloon, and the silence around her was undisturbed save by the low hum of

some insect, as it passed through the trees and flowers.

The young Countess was unusually serious: there was a cessation, a pause, as it were, in her usual gay and triumphant spirits. A thoughtfulness stole over her. She was oppressed, without exactly knowing why.

Era ni lieta ni dogliosa

Come chi teme ed altro mal non sente.

She fell into a sort of vague reverie, in which passed in review before her some of those brilliant scenes of which her happy life had been composed. The retrospect did not, as oft it had done before, give to her heart a quickened pulse of pride and animation. She cast her eyes on

a volume of Racine, from which the Duke had been reading aloud to her. The tragedy of Berenice had been chosen for the subject of their amusement, where love is painted with all that noble delicacy, that chastened fire, which makes the principal and powerful charm of that poet. What is this vaunted passion which is here portrayed?—What is that sentiment of the soul that can absorb all others?

The Lady Rosamund sighed, and the book dropped from her hand. At that moment a music wild and sonorous filled the air with richest melody, and the young Countess smiled. She knew from whence it came, and recognised in the sweet attention her brother's tenderness. On leaving the castle, the Duke had, to divert the retirement of his sister, directed his musicians to

place themselves in a grove at the bottom of the terrace, from whence the strains might reach her ear in sounds ‘ by distance made more sweet.’

Meanwhile the young Eugene, the blue-eyed darling of her heart, that child whose mingled gaiety and tenderness of disposition rendered him so peculiarly interesting, was playing on the terrace, and feeding his birds. Now and then he would glide into the room, as if wafted by the breath of the breeze, to lisp in her ear some phrase of infantine endearment ; or sometimes he would climb up behind the sofa, to lay on her bosom some choice spring, or flower of delicate perfume ; then smiling in her face, like an angel, he would timidly apologise for the frequent intrusion with that enchanting naiveté and address, which is so charming in children.

‘ Me do not want Lady Othamund to play with me. Me only bring her these flowers to make her head better ; but if she will come, me can show her where they grow.’

‘ My sweet child, I cannot come out now.’

‘ Oh no, me do not say you will come but only you *might*, you know.’

Thus alternately musing and listening to the notes which floated on the air, the Lady Rosamund beguiled the time, till at length the profound repose of all around threw her senses into a sweet composure. And when again the lovely boy came in, he saw that her eyes were closed, and softly drew back not to disturb her slumber.

Ah, beauteous Clarenstein, now dost thou slumber, when danger is so near! Now dost thou indulge the pensive softness of thy soul, when the enemy of thy peace is at hand; at the very gates; within a moment of being in thy presence! And does no guardian Sylph, attached to thy fair destiny, rouse thee from this slumber, and flash before thee the image of danger? No! they leave thee to thy fate, and Love's enchantment is already begun. Already has he cast on thy own fair person fresh harmony and grace—the very air which thou inhalest, is infected by his poison.

A sudden noise startled her: it seemed to her that the bell of the great gate had rung. ' 'Tis fancy only,' said she, and her eyes closed again. Again she starts. She hears the trampling of horses in the court. Thus roused from slumber,

her heart beat with a quickened movement. She hears the sound of many voices, and amongst them, one unknown to her, twice pronounced the name of the Duke. The sounds subside; the folding doors softly open, and Bertrand, the groom of the chambers, informs ‘*Madame la Comtesse que Monsieur le Général Comte de Mansfeldt vient d’arriver, et demande à voir Monsieur le Duc. Madame veut elle que Monsieur le Comte soit admis chez elle?*’

The name of General Count Mansfeldt brought instantly to the idea of Lady Clarenstein a thousand great and brilliant actions—the strength and bulwark of the Austrian greatness. It was a name also which the Duke was accustomed to mention with extreme affection and regard. So

instantly she replied to Bertrand, ' Surement, ne faites pas attendre M. le Comte.'

Scarcely was the word pronounced, than there appeared before her eyes a figure of even princely grandeur, who advanced with an air so full of martial confidence, that it would have been too commanding, if over every manly limb had not been cast a shade of courtly softness. He made a low obeisance: he said, that passing with his troops through that province in his road to Vienna, and having heard that the Duke was at his castle of Rhonberg, he had ridden over from the village where a detachment of them was stationed for the night, to pass with the Duke the few hours they would require for repose. To this the young Countess replied, that the Duke was at that moment absent, but she would send

instantly to acquaint him with his arrival. The General bowed. She wrote a short billet to the Duke, and with infinite sweetness expressed the part which she took in what would so greatly delight him. Again the General inclined his majestic figure. He seemed to take her for a fair phantom, and stood suspended, as does a man on whose eyes suddenly bursts a beauteous prospect. Twice did the young Countess request him to be seated, ere he seemed to comprehend her; at length, however, he was seated. The heat was excessive; he had ridden all day, and his boots were covered with dust. The Lady Rosamund gently observed, that perhaps it might be pleasant to him to lay aside some of his military accoutrements, thus delicately insinuating that she wished him to put himself at his ease in her presence. The General thanked her, and

unbracing his heavy sabre, unknotted his crimson sash, and as he rose to lay them on a chair, he cast a rapid glance round the chamber. He smiled, and said as he reseated himself, ‘ I have been lately in scenes so unlike the one in which I now find myself, that I can scarcely believe the enchantment real.’

He then spoke slightly of the fatigue of the late campaign, and seemed to anticipate, with a feeling of satisfaction, the repose he should now enjoy after four years’ hard service : peace being declared.

At that moment Eugene flew into the room in a transport of infantine delight, with a bird on his finger—calling out, ‘ Look, look, it sits upon my hand.’

And he was running up to Lady Rosamund, when, seeing the Count, he started, looked surprised, and crept timidly to her knee.

‘What a beautiful boy,’ exclaimed the Count, extending towards him a hand that might have served for a model of the finest form of manly strength and beauty. Eugene pressed close to Lady Rosamund. ‘Shake hands with the Count,’ said she to him. He looked averse, and instead of obeying her injunction, with a sudden spring he jumped on her lap, and laying his head on her shoulder, from that safe retreat he gazed at the Count with a half-smiling, half-astonished look.

The Count’s eyes were fixed on the exquisite picture. ‘Is that,’ inquired he, ‘your Grace’s youngest child?’

At this question, which implied that the Count did not know her relation to the Duke, a delicate blush passed over her cheek, and she said with irresistible grace, ‘ I think, my lord the Count mistakes me for the Duchess of Rhonberg. This sweet child is my nephew, the youngest jewel of my dear brother’s house.’

The Count explained, that he had never had the honor of seeing the Duchess of Rhonberg.

‘ That is her portrait,’ said the Countess, directing his eyes to a picture of the Duchess, which hung in the apartment.

‘ Is he angry,’ whispered Eugene, ‘ because I would not shake hands with him ?’

The Count heard him, and again extended his hand. ‘No, fair boy,’ said he, ‘but will you come now?’ and so saying, he drew nearer and seated himself on the couch by Lady Rosamund, and soon won the boy to him by his courteous softness. The young Eugene sat on his knee, and played with the rich ornaments of his military costume, and laughed, and chatted: in a word, grew perfectly at his ease.

The Lady Rosamund felt, she knew not why, more grave than ever. The Count was engaged with the child, and she became thoughtful, almost disturbed. There was something so distinguished in his address, that it was almost imposing. The Lady Rosamund, who was accustomed oftentimes to see ‘men look silly in her presence,’ beheld

now the union of even princely ease, with a politeness manly, graceful, but not obsequious.

She heard the voice of the noble stranger, low and impassioned, answering the artless questions of a child. She saw that mighty arm which had fought the battles of his country, deign to contend with an infant's strength. She saw the simplicity of greatness which was accustomed to command and to be obeyed, now submit to the playful drolleries of a stripling child. They were noisy in their play; and the Count laughed aloud, *et de bon cœur*.

‘Your hair,’ cried Eugene, lifting up a mass of dark brown hair from the Count’s forehead, ‘is so black, and mine is so white. It curls more than mine does; how do you make it curl so?’

‘ Indeed,’ said the Count, laughing, ‘ I do not know—It curls of itself, I fancy.’

‘ Shall I tell you how mine curls ?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ Why, when I go to bed, Lady Othamund turns it round her fingers, and then in the morning it is all in an uproar, as Constantine says. Does any body curl yours so ?’

‘ No, indeed,’ said the Count, ‘ nobody is so kind to me ; I am not so happy as you, fair boy.’

‘ Ah,’ cried Eugene, in a tone of alarm, as playing with his hair he discovered a large scar on the Count’s forehead, ‘ what is that great long

place on your forehead? Did you cut yourself?'
The Lady Rosamund lifted up her eyes—

' Oh, what a grace was seated on that brow,
' Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
' An eye like Mars to threaten or command.'

The Count beheld the touching expression of her eyes as they for a moment rested on his forehead,—he was a little embarrassed—he felt a proud modesty at thus having his scars of honor unveiled to the eye of a woman. So he endeavoured to divert the attention of Eugene to something else, which with some pain he effected.

' Are you come to stay with us?' asked Eugene.

‘ No, I am going away to-morrow.’

‘ But will you come back ?’

‘ Perhaps.’

‘ And will you play with me then ?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ And will you love me ?’

‘ I do love you now.’

‘ And will you love Constantine, and mamma and papa ?’

‘ Yes, certainly.’

‘ And will you love her too ?’ said he, leaning over to Lady Rosamund, and pulling softly her hand. ‘ You must love dear Lady Othamund too.’ The Count smiled—he cast a transient glance on Lady Rosamund—he did not speak.

‘ Why don’t you speak ?’ said Eugene. ‘ Perhaps you think she won’t let you—but I am sure she will — because she loves me—won’t you, Lady Othamund ? won’t you let me and the Count love you ?’

‘ Oh yes, certainly,’ said the Countess laughing, and slightly embarrassed.

‘ Oh, she says we may,’ continued the child, turning to the Count—‘ so you may love her if you please—and I am sure you will like her so much

—you will be so happy. She is so good, and tells so many pretty stories about fairies and knights, and kings and queens.’

‘ Hark,’ exclaimed Lady Rosamund, ‘ I think I hear the Duke’s voice—Yes, it is he—Come here to me, you prattler. My lord,’ said she, addressing herself to the Count, ‘ if you wish more immediately to see the Duke, at the end of that terrace, there is a flight of steps which will lead you to the path my brother must cross before he reaches the castle.’ The Count bowed. A shade of emotion passed over his features ; and he hastily withdrew.

The Countess remained on the terrace with Eugene. The Duchess soon joined her, her eyes sparkling with delight, declaring that the

arrival of the General had made the Duke the happiest of men.

‘ Have you seen him, Hermione ?’

‘ No, I left the Duke at the entrance of the beech grove. I never saw any one more happy than the Duke was when he received your note, Rosamund.’

‘ I did the honors of your castle, Duchess, as well as they can be done in your absence.’

‘ A thousand thanks for the service done, and for the flattering humility of my sweet sister,’ returned the Duchess, laughing. ‘ As we went up the river, we saw some troops at a distance going into Rhonberg, but as the country towards

Vienna is now filled with troops returning home, we did not much observe it, except for the picturesque effect they produced in these quiet vales.

In a few moments the Duke, and with him that noble stranger, entered to them. The Duchess gave him a reception full of grace and animation, and Lady Rosamund said, ‘ Do you know, Hermione, that Monsieur le Comte de Mansfeldt did me the honor to take me for you?—Nay, I am not certain that he yet knows precisely who I am.’ The Count smiled.

‘ Yes,’ replied he, ‘ I do. I know that your name is Rosamund.—Is there any other name or title attached to that imperial flower? I beseech you let me know it.’ The Duke took his sister’s

hand, and, with an action that authorised the Count to receive it, he said, ‘ The imperial rose is known also by the name of the Countess of Clarenstein.’

At that name, the Count started as if he had received an electric shock. ‘ Clarenstein!’ repeated he—he dropped the hand which he held.

‘ Is the Countess of Clarenstein, your sister?’ The smile vanished from his lips, his brow was clouded, and he bent his awful eye upon her with a look cold, serious, scrutinising. Surprise held the noble family mute—A shade of deeper carnation passed over the fair face of the young Countess, and her bosom heaved with a prouder grace. ‘ What is this?’ cried the Duke. The Count recollected himself: he said coldly, that he had

not been aware that the Countess of Clarenstein was the Duke's sister. The Duke made no reply. The Lady Clarenstein, with an air of dignity that never more became her, retired from the circle.

With much address, the Duchess endeavoured to turn the conversation on other subjects, but in vain were all her graceful efforts. The animation and pleasure, which ten minutes before had irradiated every countenance, were banished. Astonishment on the part of the Duke cast a shade of reserve over his manner. He loved and honored the Count above all men, and he awaited with impatience the moment which should allow him to ask an explanation of a conduct so extraordinary. The Lady Rosamund, when she returned to them, showed no marks of resentment for what had passed. She said little, however. The Count

did not address himself to her, and he was polite, cold and distant.

The evening was short. The Duchess retired early. Whether or not the Duke was satisfied with the explanation which he received from the Count, will be known hereafter. The Lady Rosamund went with the Duchess to her chamber.

‘ In the name of all that is extraordinary,’ exclaimed she, ‘ do tell me, Hermione, if you know what this means? Is the Count de Mansfeldt wrong in his head?’

‘ By the life of the Duke,’ cried the Duchess, ‘ I cannot explain this mystery. Have you yourself no suspicion of the cause?’

‘None upon earth—till this evening I never saw the Count. I knew him only by reputation, as every one else knows him.’

‘The Duke will ask him, however. Of that I am certain : I saw displeasure in his eye.’

‘’Tis very strange. I saw no signs of discontent before. He seemed pleased with the reception given him : and though he does smile in most lofty guise, yet still he did smile. To start at my name ! To drop my hand ! proud fastidious lord ! Did you see it ?’

‘Aye, my sweet sister, I beheld it.’

‘But,’ continued the young Countess, in a half-laughing, half-resentful tone, ‘if this proud

friend of Rhonberg's came here in thunder and lightning to declare war against my name, though I cannot command his dainty liking, I will know, at least, how to command his silence. I will not be frightened at a pair of black brows, be they as black as the Olympian Jove's. If my fair name displease him, let him depart and breathe another air; let another land bear his august weight—I'll promise not to cross his path to startle him.'

'I foresee that he will some day be at your feet for this — there is some mistake, some misunderstanding.'

'At my feet! I scarcely think that he can bend so low, unless it were to some Empress or other, who would give him her crown.'

‘ He has indeed a most noble presence !’

‘ Tall enough ; he looks as if his front would quarrel with the stars for shining.’

‘ He has something of a chivalrous air, like Francis the First.’

‘ Francis the First, Duchess ! that prince of all gallantry—the cream of courtesy, and pink of politeness ! Do you think that Francis the First would have behaved in that way to me, if I had lived in his age, and been presented to him ?’

‘ He has something in his smile that resembles the Duke’s,’ went on the Duchess.

‘ The Duke’s upper lip is not disfigured by those Austrian mustachios.’

‘ Disfigured ! I think that it adds a manliness and grace to his countenance that is pleasing.’

‘ Not like my name !’ repeated the Lady Rosamund, after a moment’s pause.

‘ It must be some secret prejudice.’

‘ Prejudice ! dear Duchess, what prejudice can exist in his mind against me ? I never, that I know of, injured any one.’

‘ Only a small army of men without hearts.’

‘ Oh that goes for nothing. Those sort of injuries are understood to mean nothing.’

‘ Perhaps the Count does not think it quite so much an affair of nothing.’

‘ He has no right to be offended at other people’s wrongs.’

‘ Perhaps he is afraid of becoming one of that heartless band.’

‘ And defends himself before he is attacked.’

‘ The Count has been much in Hungary. When you resided there, did you never see him?’

‘ No ; it so chanced that he never came to Buda. I heard him often mentioned with enthusiasm by the people of that country for his great humanity, and by officers who served under him

who were occasionally at Buda. He had the reputation of being wholly devoted to war, and of being insensible to pleasure, and the dissipation for which men of his profession are in general so noted. He was called austere in his manners, severe in discipline, inaccessible to the siren voice of pleasure — not much like Francis the First that I think, Duchess? But come, I see you are sleepy, I will send you your women. You shall tell me to-morrow what the Duke says.'

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.



THE next morning at her reveil, the young Countess received from the hands of her woman a billet.

‘What is this, Helene?’ said she half asleep, and not observing the hand writing of the Duke.

‘One of my Lady Duchess’s women brought it to me, Madam. The Duke left it in her chamber this morning, before he set off!’

‘Set off!’ repeated Lady Rosamund.

‘My Lord Duke went as far as———with the Count this morning. They set off at day break.’

The Countess opened the note and read as follows.

‘My Lady and Sister. I am going as far as —— on the road to Vienna with General Mansfeldt, but I shall do all in my power to return to breakfast as usual with you. May I hope that you will then be disposed to receive with your accustomed candor the communication which I am under the necessity of making to you.

‘Rhonberg.’

The Countess read this letter twice over, without being able to understand from it, the nature of the communication which the Duke had to make to her—but it was evident since he thought it necessary to bespeak her candor, that it was a subject not only displeasing to him, but would also be so to her. There was likewise a coldness in the expressions of his note very unlike the playful ‘eloquence du billet’ in which he usually addressed her. The Duke and his sister were accustomed to breakfast together in her apartments, as the Duchess rose late. They passed together the first hours of the morning, as the young Countess,

‘with slumbers light, that fly th’ approach of morn,’

always quitted her chamber at an early hour.

She was yet laying on her white forehead the glossy ringlets of her dark hair, when she heard the Duke enter the adjoining apartment.——

‘Braid up my hair as fast as you can,’ said she to Helene, ‘I can finish dressing afterwards!’ So not to make the Duke wait, she wrapped around her slender form, a loose robe of pale-colored sattin, and went to him.

The Duke was standing by the window: he looked grave. He did not, as he was accustomed to do, embrace his sister—He only held out his hand to her and said, ‘Will you give me some breakfast, Contessa? I have ridden forty miles since four o’clock this morning.’

They seated themselves. The Duke did not take his usual place. The Lady Rosamund felt

uneasy—any change, however slight, in the Duke's manner was of importance to her, since the equanimity of his temper never suffered an apparent alteration but from some serious cause. The next time therefore, that she addressed him, though it was only to ask if he would have some coffee, her softened, anxious voice betrayed her feeling of his altered manner.

The Duke drew his chair into its accustomed position nearer his sister—but he only said gently ‘*Si Contessa, si vous voulez bien,*’ and he began to eat his breakfast.

The young Countess sat turning her spoon in her tea with a pensive uneasy air—not a word was spoken. Helene came in with a basket of flowers which she placed on the table. Now the

Lady Clarenstein was accustomed every morning to make up a nosegay for the Duke—so she drew the flowers near her, and began selecting some of them—but she had never before found so much difficulty in making a nosegay. The flowers all turned the wrong way, and their colors did not assort. At length seeing that the Duke did not open on the subject of his letter, she drew it out gently from within the folds of her robe, and said, ‘you tell me in this, that there is something of which you wish to inform me.’

‘There is——are you disposed to receive it?’

‘Am I disposed? Am I ever otherwise? Rhonberg, you are offended at something!’

‘ Offended ? No—I am hurt !’

‘ At what ! I beseech you, let me know it !’

‘ You will not like what I have to say.’

‘ Perhaps not—but nothing that I can hear will be so painful as the ——— coldness of your manner,’ she would have said ; but the word died on her lips.

‘ I have not indeed the right,’ continued the Duke with increased gravity, ‘ to resent an estrangement from what I conceive to be the high point of female honor ; but I must be wounded at it.’

The Lady Rosamund looked appalled. The Duke went on—

‘ You will perhaps esteem such delicacy in me a weakness, but that you will pardon—your sentiments I know are widely different from mine on this point—for I think that you are well assured that my attachment to you is not that of a common brother ; if it were, I might perhaps, like them, smile, and suffer such slight deviations from propriety to pass.——But to know that the conduct of the Count de Mansfeldt last night to you which alarmed the jealous tenderness of my feelings of what is due to you—to feel, I say, that such conduct was justified,——’

‘ *Justified!*’ repeated the Countess proudly.

‘ It is painful to me to know that the man I love and honor above all men, is justified in thinking less nobly than I do, of my sister.’

‘ I can imagine no cause the Count de Mansfeldt should have to think of me otherwise than well.’

‘ Know you of none ?’

‘ None, on my honor.’

‘ Are then the triumphs of your coquetry so numerous that they escape your memory ? The Chevalier Ferdinand St. Julien. . . .’

A crimson blush covered the face of the young Countess. The Duke was answered. He paused ; a moment after he thus addressed her. ‘ It may be imagined that the circumstance, which took place yesterday evening in my presence, greatly astonished and displeased me. The explanation

which the Count de Mansfeldt gave me with extreme reluctance, yielding only to my earnest entreaty, was as follows. " It is now three years since the battle of———one of the most memorable for the glory of the Austrian arms. The pride of the German youth were there, and fought as if to contest among each other the palm of glory. The Chevalier Ferdinand St. Julien alone was not found at his post in the field of honor. He was at that time an officer in the regiment of General M * * * * who commanded the army. The Chevalier had for some time been stationed at Buda, from whence three days before the battle he had received orders to return to the army with the party under his command: he was not specially informed of the intended engagement: he was commanded only to return, his active services being required. He

disobeyed his orders. He was not at the battle. He arrived the day after it had been won. A court martial was instituted: the Chevalier was tried, cashiered, dishonored, and dismissed the service."

The young Countess betrayed signs of great emotion. The Duke went on.

"Frantic with shame he attempted his life. General Mansfeldt, under whose protection he had been from his first entrance into the service, was moved with compassion at his extreme despair. He knew him to be a young man of ardent feelings and the noblest sense of honor; 'till that moment, never having swerved from the line of duty. He went to the Chevalier; he counseled, and sustained him under the weight

of his disgrace : he showed him the possibility of regaining his lost honor : promised to let him serve under him as a volunteer, and engaged to give him opportunities of signalising himself in the most hazardous achievements. The Chevalier fell at his feet, and thanked him, as if it had been for life itself. The Count then inquired what had detained him at Buda. Then the wretched youth, in a paroxysm of love, grief and indignation pronounced the name of Clarenstein, and told a tale of passion even to idolatry on his part, of witchery and seduction on hers. It was that Lady who had demanded of him as a proof of his love, that sacrifice of his obedience. He, little dreaming of the battle, consented, though with pain. He was present at the fête at which she, like another Armida, despoiled him of his honor.

The Count insisted that never more he should behold that dangerous beauty. The madly enamored boy prostrated himself at his feet imploring his General not to demand such a sacrifice. 'Are you beloved?' he cried. The boy was silent. The General then was firm, the resignation he demanded was the price of his favor. He had patience with the wild ravings of a passion to which himself was a stranger. He heard the name of Clarenstein a thousand times pronounced with the expression of a sick delirious fancy. At length he conquered. The Chevalier regained his friend, his honor, and his former post. He fought like a lion in several desperate engagements and all was repaired—all but the injury done to his peace of mind. Yet did the General, for the sake of that nice honor which he thinks should guard the name of a noble Lady

from all aspersion, conceal the tale he had heard. It was known that love had been the cause of the Chevalier's misfortune—the rest was concealed."

The Duke was silent. He rose from his seat, and pressed his sister's hand. 'I am sorry,' said he, 'thus to disturb you: but I could no otherwise explain what passed last night.'

A shower of tears fell from the eyes of the Countess. The Duke twice kissed her passive hand, and left the room.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

THE Count, after spending a few days at Vienna, returned to Rhonberg, the Duke and Duchess having warmly solicited him to spend with them the time they proposed remaining there. The second meeting of himself and Lady Clarenstein was far different from the first. The Count had been where he had heard all the world vaunting the power of her charms, and the abuse which she made of it. The secret prejudice, therefore,

which he entertained against her character was in no wise diminished, and the distant politeness with which he behaved to her, sufficiently evinced it.

It is in the retirement of the country alone where character and disposition show themselves without constraint, and the young Countess had full opportunity of observing that of her proud enemy, as she called him; and the more she observed, the more she regretted that in so noble and generous a mind there should exist an impression of herself so little favorable; for it was in affairs of the heart alone, where her vanity was strongly excited, that the Lady Rosamund ceased to be candid and reasonable. The Count possessed a strong and ardent soul, the most perfect self-command allied to a passionate admiration

of every thing that is beautiful and grand in the works of art and nature. He was not only an accomplished soldier, he was also what the soldier seldom is, an accomplished man of literature. He had studied as well as fought. He had a flow of language lofty and simple—a richness of imagery in which he clothed his sentiments, that possessed all the seductive power of eloquence—eloquence which never prostituted itself to render vice or error amiable, but which served to render more beautiful, sentiments full of integrity, sound judgment and liberality, at once exalted and indulgent.

The Count's life had been devoted to the severe duties of his profession. Pleasure and the soft play of the affections were known to him only as beautiful illusions, in which he must not

indulge his fancy. But sometimes a slight melancholy, resting on his fine countenance, told the penetrating observer that he was framed for all the sweet charities of life—it seemed like the emanation of a soul made for tenderness and joy. Of women, and all the variety of the female character, he knew little—he had lived but little in their society—he regarded them as a species of beautiful flowers, too delicate to be mixed with the austere laurels which he gathered. He regarded them as with a kind of blind adoration, firmly believing that their minds were as lovely as their persons. He was, in a word, a creature formed to be their dupe; to give up his whole soul to them, and to be deceived. Yet did he not suspect the depth of his own character, and the immense capability with which his heart was endowed for attaching itself to a beloved object.

Now, in the lap of peace, all the sensibilities of his nature were awakened by objects of loveliness and grace. The interchange of the soft affections, smiles and winning endearments, the charm of nature, united to a classic elegance of taste, these, and a thousand other, to him yet unknown, ‘*strane dolcezze della vita umana*,’ all poured like a torrent on his heart, and lulled in sweet repose that soul accustomed to the hard exertions of magnanimous fortitude and self-denial. For the Count was a soldier of fortune. He had known adversity, and his present greatness was the beautiful structure of his own virtues.

The hours now flew for him on silken wings. Yet were all his attentions directed towards the Duchess. It was her hand which he solicited, when, as they often did, they joined the dance of

the peasants on the lawn before the castle. It was for her he spread his mantle on the grass, if fatigued with walking she wished to repose. It was on her side of the barouche that he drew up his horse in their moonlight drives.

Now the fair Rosamund opposed to this indifference nothing but the sweetest affability. It was impossible not to be wounded at it, but she had too much dignity to resent it: but neither did she attempt, by flattering blandishments, to appease the offended power.

‘I think,’ said she one day to the Duchess, ‘that it is little less than hate.’

‘If it is not the effect of caution,’ replied the Duchess, ‘it is very bad taste.’

If the Countess had so construed the behaviour of her proud enemy, it is possible that she might have seen in it more to gratify than wound her self-love; and probably she would so have interpreted it, had she not known that a strong prejudice existed against her in his mind. It has been said before, that the Count knew little of the character of women, and he suspected not that ever he should behold in a coquette that which was to win his whole soul away. He never dreamt of danger, for the first few days of his residence at Rhonberg: but as the time passed on by degrees, he began to observe that in Lady Clarenstein's deportment, there was a nobleness, an ease, an absence so entire, of all the inferior arts of coquetry, even to a neglect oftentimes of occasions on which it might fairly have exercised itself, that astonished and perplexed him. He knew from

the Duke that she was informed of the part he had taken in the unfortunate affair of the Chevalier St. Julien. He half regretted that he had not better concealed his knowledge of it. He half wished to apologise for the uncourteous action into which he had been betrayed at the moment of being presented to her.

One evening, as they were returning from a drive of some distance, the night closed in with heavy clouds, which threatened a storm. The Duchess was liable to be alarmed at thunder. The gentlemen rode up, and the Duke apprehending that a storm would come on, told the postilions to drive on at full speed, hoping to reach Rhonberg ere it came on with violence. They did so; but they had not proceeded half a league, before a tremendous flash of lightning,

which came in the faces of the front horses, so startled one of them, that it reared and plunged in a frightful manner. All was confusion. The Duke called to them to take the horses out. They obeyed. The Duchess was much frightened.

‘My dearest love,’ said the Duke, ‘it is impossible to proceed ’till the storm is over: compose yourself: there is no danger.’ The Duchess wished to alight and take shelter in a thick grove hard by.

‘You are better here,’ said the Duke; ‘but if you wish it,’—and seeing terror in her countenance, which she vainly endeavoured to restrain, assisted her to alight. Lady Rosamund followed. They entered the grove, and stationed themselves

under the shade of some large trees. The storm was loud, and the rain began to pour in torrents. The Duchess, no longer able to conceal her terrors, threw herself on the breast of the Duke, trembling, and concealing her eyes not to behold the lightning. Meantime the young Countess, with her back to a tree, stood like the angel in the midst of the storm; silent, yet awed. The wind blew the white plumes of her hat with a picturesque wildness against her cheek. Her fair hands tried to hold on her bosom her light scarf, which fluttered in disorder round her, and there was a mixture of wildness and composure in her air and figure and in the expression of her large black eyes a little thrown upwards, that fixed the attention of the Count Mansfeldt who stood near her.

‘ Are you not frightened ?’ said he.

‘ No,’ she replied, ‘ but I think that it is very awful.’ It was the first time that the Count had ever immediately addressed her, and the dialogue went no further.

At length the heavens became serene—the storm was over—and the Duchess recovered from her fear. The horses were put to, and they proceeded on the road to the castle. It was quite dusk. Fatigued and harassed by her apprehensions, the Duchess laid herself back in the carriage, and they proceeded in silence. The Lady Clarenstein was no more than her sister disposed for conversation. There was something in the indifference of General Mansfeldt to her, that had been more than usually apparent that even-

ing. His cold silence: the little solicitude which he seemed to feel for the inconvenience that she suffered during the storm, mortified her. Her thoughts were thus engaged, when General Mansfeldt, pulling his horse up along side of the barouche, said, in a softened voice, ‘ I hope that you do not suffer from the wet.’ Now it was too dark to distinguish the expression of the Count’s face, and certain as Lady Rosamund felt that the question, and the tone in which it was spoken, were not addressed to her, she concluded that the Count had mistaken her for Hermione. She made no answer, but gently rousing the Duchess she said, ‘ Hermione, Monsieur le Général desires to know how you are.’ The Duchess replied, and thanked him. The Count bowed, checked his horse, and let the barouche pass on.

‘What then,’ said he to himself, ‘does she think that I am an unfeeling brute, so little anxious for her safety, that a simple inquiry, dictated by common benevolence, cannot be addressed to her, but to the Duchess? Does she think that I have not common humanity? When I saw the rain beating on her breast, in spite of those exquisite hands which but ill guarded it. It is true that I took off my cloak to cover the Duchess from the storm, but it was because I dare not offer it to her. She much mistakes if she thinks that I can see a woman exposed to difficulties, and give myself no care about them. I would rather have had all the waters of the Rhine upon mine own head, than see that throne of loveliness deluged beneath all that wet lawn: I suppose that she thinks I did not see that—nor all her

forgetfulness of herself, while she was consoling and supporting her sister. I cannot bear that any one should think me an unfeeling brute.'

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

THE next morning the young Countess waiting for the Duke to breakfast, stepped from her apartment into a viranda to gather some moss-roses. The morning was beautiful, the dew yet rested on the grass, and a soft light air played among the branches of the trees. On the lawn beneath, her brother and the Count were slowly walking. The thick foliage of the flowers concealed her, and not to overhear their discourse, the Lady

Rosamund put back the branches which shaded her from their sight, and spoke to the Duke. To the Count she bowed her graceful head.

‘Era un salute soavemente altera.’

‘I am quite well,’ said she, replying to an inquiry of the Duke’s after her health—‘but are you not coming?’ ‘Immediately, Contessa,’ he answered, and then spoke to the Count, who replied with an air of embarrassment, and as if refusing to assent to what the Duke proposed. ‘It is impossible,’ she heard him say—— ‘I cannot—I have not the boldness——I can employ myself ’till your return.’ ‘Contessa,’ said the Duke, detaining him by the arm. She understood the expression of his eye. It intimated that she should ask the Count to breakfast

with them. So bending over the balcony she said to the Count, 'if it is not displeasing to you to come with the Duke, it will give me pleasure. I shall otherwise feel that I deny you the satisfaction of his company.'

The Count half-pleased, half-embarrassed, said, 'that she did him too much honor,' in a voice so low that it was scarcely audible, and followed the Duke to her cabinet. Never had the eyes of the soldier beheld any thing so bewitchingly fair as that Lady whom he felt every moment more deeply to regret having offended. He was silent, and a sort of half-dignified embarrassment gave a constraint to his actions that would have gratified the young Countess, if she had known the feeling from which it proceeded: but satisfied that the Count disliked her, she

attributed all the reserve of his manner to that cause ; and content with having obliged the Duke by asking him, she addressed all her conversation to the latter. She was gay, animated, irresistibly charming. The Count sighed when he felt the different tone in which she addressed him and the Duke : he envied Rhonberg, the courteous smiles which she gave him—the freedom of her air and the playfulness of her actions. He would have given his right hand if she would have said to him ‘ you,’ instead of speaking to him in the third person. ‘ Monsieur le Comte préfère-t-il,’ or ‘ permettra-t-il,’ seemed so plainly to say, I treat you with all possible honor because you are my brother’s friend. If she cast her eye on him, its softened expression vanished : if she spoke, it was without a smile : if she was of a different opinion to him, she said so with an

air ‘alteramente umile,’ not with that playful desire of contest that she did to the Duke her brother. The Count was unhappy, and he was silent : — he was thoughtful — he no longer attempted to take any part in the conversation, and wished breakfast at an end, that the Countess might be relieved from the tediousness of his presence.

The young Countess divided the cluster of roses which she had gathered—she gave some to the Duke, ‘Will you wear these to day?’ said she. The Duke kissed the hand whiter than snow that placed the flowers in his breast. The Count never moved his eyes. The Duke looked expressively at his sister, and then at the flowers on the table. She shook her head. ‘Pray do ; he is hurt,’ whispered the Duke.—‘If you desire it?’ said she, carelessly.

The Count neither seemed to see nor hear, when that lovely hand, the very perfection of female softness, laid beside him a beautiful half-blown bud; her hand chanced to touch his own. He started——looked disordered. ‘Again!’ exclaimed involuntarily the young Countess, and blushing deeply. The Count felt to what she alluded. Provoked at himself, he said something unintelligible about his ‘absence,’ and went out of the room in much disorder, leaving the rose on the table. The Lady Rosamund looked at her brother: ‘What does this mean?’ said she.

‘More than is declared,’ replied the Duke, who understood what had passed.

‘’Tis very like aversion;’ said she coldly.

‘ Not much, Contessa.’

‘ What is it then pray may I ask ?’

‘ Time will show.’

‘ I never thought to see this little hand twice cast away. Is there poison in my fingers ?’

The Duke laughed : ‘ More than you suspect,’ thought he.

‘ Why do you laugh, Rhonberg ?’

‘ Time will show.’

‘ I do not understand you—but I do not like to be hated even by the Count.’

‘ Even by the Count,’ repeated the Duke—that ‘ even’ is delightfully flattering.

‘ Don’t you go to see what ails him?’

‘ No—the fresh air will recover him :—this cabinet is so perfumed. The odor of roses is disagreeable to him perhaps.’

‘ It seems to me that *roses* of all sorts offend him.’

‘ Yes, even the rose unique,’ said the Duke affectionately. ‘ But come, are you disposed to read some Spanish with me, now I am at your service for an hour or two?’

‘I shall like it very much. Let us go into the viranda—we shall get out of the perfumed cabinet; perhaps it annoys you too.’

‘No,’ said the Duke significantly—‘my senses are not disordered by *roses*.’

So saying, he took from her hand the books which she held, and removed into the viranda.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

As it was the custom at Rhonberg to do exactly that which was most agreeable to the inhabitants, not because the Lord and Lady of the castle wished to put off from themselves the trouble of amusing their guests, but because it was their desire that every one should be at their ease; the Count never appeared 'till dinner-time. He had been wandering over the woods and lawns, the whole morning.

He entered the dining room some moments after every body had been seated. He bowed his excuses to the Duchess—never looked at Lady Rosamund, and began a sort of disjointed tête-à-tête with the Duke. But on his features rested that shade of pensive thoughtfulness which seemed to betray what had been the subject of his reveries that morning. It was agreed during dinner, that they should sail up the river to that ruin whither the Duke had gone on the evening of the Count's arrival. Soon after, the Duchess rose from table, and having some letters to write for Vienna, she went to her apartment to finish them. Half an hour after, the Duke went to her, and the Count slowly sauntered into the saloon. It was empty. He threw himself into a chair, and leaning his head on his hand, some minutes passed in reflective silence, when suddenly from

the terrace, the Lady Rosamund flew into the room with an air of terror even to wildness. She darted towards the door. The Count's voice arrested her. 'Is any thing the matter?' exclaimed he:—'What has happened?'

She came up to him. 'My Lord,' said she, her hands clasped together, 'for the love of heaven save him.'

'Save whom?—what?' 'Eugene,' cried she, pointing to the terrace. The Count stayed to hear no further, but disappeared.

The sweet child had been playing on the terrace, while Lady Rosamund, who was sitting there, was reading. Unseen by her, he had climbed over the balustrades which bordered the

terrace, and had let himself down on the pediment or base on which they stood. Heedless, and unconscious of his danger, the lovely child stood balancing himself by his hands, smiling at the novelty of his situation.

The Count shuddered when he beheld him. He came up gently, and leaning over the rails, said, 'Is that pleasant?'

'Oh yes——do try!'

The Count saw indeed that the only means by which he could save him was to place himself in the same perilous position. The base indeed was scarcely wide enough for him to stand, but the boy had got too low to admit of the possibility of reaching him from above.

‘ Shall I come down ?’ said he calmly.

‘ Oh, do, do.’

‘ Stand fast then ’till I come.’

So saying the Count sprung over the rails. He sustained his foot firm on the perilous edge. A hair’s breadth was between him and destruction. He measured the height above with his eye, and in a moment ere the boy was aware, he cast his arm around him, grasped him by the waist, lifted him over the height, and let him fall gently on the turf beneath, unhurt, and even laughing at the adventure. He ran into the saloon. The Count vaulted over the rails, and followed him. He saw the child on the lap of the Countess. She clasped him in her arms—

called him by the tenderest names, and a deluge of tears fell from her eyes. ‘Merciful heaven,’ she exclaimed, ‘what would have become of thy mother if——’

The Count’s manly heart was moved at the natural expression of feelings, which placed all the woman before his eyes. Eugene surprised and half frightened at the paleness of Lady Rosamund’s countenance and her extreme emotion, of which he did not clearly understand that he was the cause, wound his arm round her neck and said, ‘dear Lady Othamund, what is it?—— why do you cry so?’

At length she left gazing on the child, and gratitude to his preserver suspended the first transports of her joy. She lifted up her eyes on

him as he stood before her, and said with an affecting earnestness, 'What can I say, my Lord? you have done me a service that the universe could not repay.'

I scarcely imagine how you took him from that dreadful situation! 'Oh, he came down to me,' said the child. She shuddered. She comprehended alike the extent of the danger and the peril in which the Count had put himself in order to save the boy. She turned pale—and sickened, and bent her head over him. 'Are you vexed that I went there?' cried Eugene.

'His mother,' faintly exclaimed the Countess, 'his mother, who would have died with grief but for you, shall thank you as the greatness of the gift deserves.' The Count kissed the fore-

head of Eugene wet with her tears. He was silent, for, in truth, he was too much moved to speak. Now the young Countess mistook this silence for a fresh proof of his cold indifference to herself. At that moment her soul was softened; and too much impressed by gratitude to be capable of entertaining any feeling of a personal kind. But she felt the more the cold unkindness which seemed thus, on every occasion, to refuse any communion of feeling with her, however sacred and important. So pressing the child to her bosom she said in a tremulous voice, ‘As for myself I love this child so entirely, that not even the gratitude of a mother can exceed mine——but from me——there is a painful certainty at my heart, that thanks from me would be grating in your ear——So my Lord, from the bottom of my soul I thank you in my sister’s name.——’

Come boy, we will go to her. In truth thou hast put me into a fearful panic.' Saying these words, she arose, took him in her arms, and murmuring over him ten thousand blessings, accompanied by the most tender embraces, she left the room.

The Count stood riveted to the earth. 'What did she say?' at length he cried, 'that thanks from her——by heaven I cannot suffer this——She shall not think so——I will go instantly, and tell her——it is too much.'

The Count precipitately followed her. He saw her passing through the great hall leading to the apartments of the Duchess. She sat down on the steps to recover herself. She was drying

her fair eyes when he came up. She heard his step, and rose to retire.

‘Lady Clarenstein!’ cried he, ‘may I beg to be heard——one moment.’ She turned round. ‘I am the most miserable man alive,’ went on the Count, ‘if you have not the goodness to bury in everlasting forgetfulness an action, which I can never enough regret. You said just now, that “thanks” from you would be grating to my ear. I can no longer endure to be for ever misunderstood. Madam, I would spend my heart’s blood to serve you—and I beseech you to believe that I have been miserable ever since the evening of my arrival. You know to what I allude. I was wrong; impetuous. I come now to say so—pray forget it, and pardon me.’

‘ Pardon you, my Lord ! The indignation which you expressed was justified by the cause.’

‘ That is nothing. Be what I heard true or false, it was in me a most injurious action. Perhaps it hurt you ?’

‘ I believe it did.’

‘ I know,’ said the Count in a low, subdued voice, ‘ that I am too blunt in manner to do any thing but displease you——but I am sure that not willingly would I do any thing that should hurt the feelings of a woman.’

‘ I believe it, and will think of it, my Lord, no more !’

‘ You are an angel,’ cried the Count abruptly, ‘ I will have your name engraven on my shield—it shall be my cry of war. It shall take more towns for the Emperor than all the thunder of his cannon.’

The Countess smiled.

‘ Say you forgive me.’

‘ I do.’

‘ And will you not misunderstand every thing that I say.’

‘ Not if the meaning is clear.’

‘ And will you not make another answer when I speak to you, as you did last night when I asked if you were tired ?’

‘ I will promise always to answer you when I am certain that you mean to speak to me, which last night I did not understand.’

‘ And will you thank me now in your own name for saving the boy’s life.’

‘ Oh, I do indeed.

‘ And will you——’

‘ What my Lord?’

The Count clasped her fair hand, and kissed it. ‘I meant this.’

‘It is like taking a town by storm, and asking the Governor’s leave to enter it!’

‘This,’ cried he for saving the boy, and this ———, ‘For what other reason, my Lord!’ said she. ‘You are too fertile in invention,’ and she withdrew the treasure from his princely hands.

‘Oh for a thousand! I could give, if I may so be paid, every drop of blood in my veins.’

‘What would you so cast away your precious life,’ said the young Countess, turning from him

with an enchanting smile, and an air of virgin majesty that infinitely became her.

That smile that air were the death-warrants of the Count's liberty.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

I SHALL not pourtray, step by step, the gradation of love's power on the heart of Count Mansfeldt. Suffice it to say, that the poison worked into every fibre of his heart, and before many days were passed, the expression of 'madly enamored,' which, with some severity, he had bestowed on the young St. Julien, might, with even equal justice, be given to his General.

All coldness and restraint between them being now dissolved, he gave himself up to the ever new delight which the character of the Countess brought each hour into play. He breakfasted with her in the morning, he danced with her in the evening, he followed her steps all day like her shadow, and if for an hour he was constrained to be where she was not, he thought over every word that she had uttered, every graceful action; —repeated to himself in a whisper, certain little dainty phrases that she was accustomed to use, and in a word, acted over all the enamored follies which are to be found in the archives of the court of love.

The Duke saw all this, and so did Hermione. The fair Rosamund alone, gay, full of a charming ease, seemed to ascribe to the Count nothing of

a personal nature. All his attentions to her she attributed to the desire which a generous mind feels to do away every trace of coldness which might exist after a recent reconciliation, and she saw nothing further in it.—Besides, the fair Rosamund was accustomed to be the object of attention, and to be adored. So there was not the charm of novelty to excite suspicion in her mind as to its cause. But it was not long ere the Count's eyes were opened as to the situation of his own heart. He had never loved. His mind had not been enervated and rendered familiar to the reception of passion, and he therefore did not recognise its first impressions. Love was not in his eyes a 'talent de société,' a thing which may serve as well for the light frivolous entertainment of a drawing-room, as any other 'jeu de bonne compagnie.' He had never been accustomed to the

language of gallantry, which may be styled 'L'esprit de l'amour.' He did not know by heart any of those Gentilleses which are repeated at random to all the sex. Love with him was 'sérieusement une affaire du cœur,' and therefore he had better taste than to be for evermore talking of what he did not understand, like all those essenced sprigs of fashion, who fly about like butterflies in a flower-garden, so lightly fluttering on each flower, that they scarcely make the shadow of an impression on any. A single word from the lips of the young Countess, spoken without design, sufficed to give birth in his soul to a crowd of reflexions new and strange. The conversation one evening turned on what was most requisite for the happiness of life. I shall not repeat what was said de part et d'autre.

The Count had only spoken vaguely on the subject. His lofty mind, susceptible of the greatest sacrifices, educated in the school of adversity, spoke of happiness as being independent of outward circumstances, yet was there in his eloquence a somewhat of a pensive cast, of unsatisfied feeling. He spoke not in the language of sensibility, of an 'aching void,' a craving after happiness, '*le besoin d'aimer et d'être aimé*;' for active duty, and the most noble exercise of his faculties, had so filled up his days, that he had had no time to waste in languid, petulant complaints of their weariness. The source of enjoyment was not dried up in his soul by a lawless diffusion of that which should serve as a refreshment to the mind, after difficult and laborious exertion: but still he spoke as if happiness were a thing that he had been content to live without, rather than had

possessed : and while he spoke, the Lady Rosamund could not forbear feeling affected at the grandeur of his sentiments, thus tinctured with the pale cast of thought. 'She honored that proud enthusiasm which kept back its ardent conceptions, that chastened fire, that noble forgetfulness of himself, the truest test of real greatness, and when he ceased to speak, she lifted up her dark eyes and said, 'It seems, then, that your happiness has hitherto consisted in making others so ; that is the happiness of a God rather than of mortal man. Is that sufficient for a human soul ?' The Count replied not, but the words fell on his heart, and made strange disorder there. A new world broke, as it were, on his view : a world in which a power yet unknown presided ; whose enchantments, half unveiled to the soul's eye, delighted and alarmed : a world whose paths were

strewn with roses. On every side soft delight, and evermore the form, the smile, the dark eye of Lady Rosamund glided like a phantom, and drew his soul away. The Count oftentimes broke from the enchantment as one who raises himself from a pleasing dream, and barred the entrance of love into his breast; for to a noble and well regulated mind, the first dawnings of a sentiment hitherto unfelt, and its extent and influence unknown, ever excite distrust and apprehension. It fears lest its admission to the heart should disturb the harmony and order which exist there. It is like a beautiful ornament in architecture, which, though graceful in itself, may not be of the same order with the structure that we are raising; and therefore good taste rejects it. Thus was it with the Count, to whose thoughtful mind love seemed too fair, too exquisitely penetrating, too produc-

tive of joy, to be a fit inmate in that heart where austere duty had till now held an undivided sway. He paused on the banks of that Rubicon, which once passed, there was no return. Not glory, not ambition, invited him to cross the stream. Those might be resisted. But the beauteous phantom wandered on its bank. He beheld that smile, that eye dark and brilliant, which like the famed serpent's gaze, drew away his half-reluctant, yet enamored, soul. He paused no more. He plunged into the wave, and when on the opposite bank he stood, love waved on high his purple pinions, and his smile spoke victory!

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

Now it was not long ere the Duke became assured of what he already suspected, that the Count loved his sister: though there existed between them the most perfect confidence, yet as it costs something to that sex of its accustomed independence of spirit to say, 'I love,' the Count from day to day protracted the moment in which he should be constrained to own his new-born passion. 'Mais l'amour se trahit par son

propre feu,' and it signifies nothing to cast a veil over it. The burning torch beneath proclaims the hidden fire.

The Count, one day off his guard, caught Eugene to his breast, and passionately pressed his lips to that forehead where, an instant before, the Countess had done the same. The action was not ambiguous: neither was it unobserved of her. A few minutes after she took Eugene by the hand, and went out of the room.

' Bien, mon Ami !' said the Duke. ' C'étoit de bon cœur cela.'

' Is she offended ?'

' C'étoit au moins *un peu trop fort.*'

A long silence ensued. The Duke resumed his book which he had before been reading, and the Count walked to the window. The beauteous phantom again pursued him; he saw her on the lawn with the Duke's two children.

‘The children only are happy in this house,’ said the Count, as if to himself. ‘They get every thing.’

‘I am sorry,’ said the Duke, looking up, ‘that you are not happy in this house.’

The Count did not hear him. His soul was hovering near the lovely groupe.

Eugene and Constantine were running a race to see who first could reach the Countess. Con-

stantine was the better racer, he sprung into her arms, and shouted for joy. Eugene hung his head and began to cry. To pacify him Lady Rosamund stooped and tenderly embraced him. ‘ Ah,’ cried the Count, ‘ who would wish for victory?’

‘ May I enquire,’ asked the Duke, ‘ the cause of that soldier-like exclamation?’

‘ She haunts me every where,’ said the Count in a low voice; ‘ I cannot move a step but I see her;’ and he withdrew from the window.

‘ Raymond,’ said the Duke anxiously, ‘ you love my sister!’

Startled at the abrupt accusation, the Count made no reply. But he grasped the Duke’s hand

fervently. The Duke was silent too—he was answered—he became thoughtful.

The Count looked at him, a suspicion darted across his mind. ‘Is it,’ said he, ‘displeasing to my friend that his sister should be beloved by me?’

‘’Tis as I feared!’ said the Duke to himself.

‘Feared!’

‘It will never end but in misery!’

‘Misery!—To whom?’

‘I would have given half my dukedom,’ went he on warmly, ‘that this had never been.’

With inexpressible dignity, but with great emotion, the Count a second time grasped the Duke's hand, and said, 'Then it shall *not* be. I can crush the risings of this passion.' The Duke shook his head. 'I can and will,' said the Count with a proud warmth of eye and action. 'Rhönberg, you are the noblest friend that ever man had, and never shall the friendship between us be broken by any act of mine. Forget what I have said. If to have addressed the Countess of Clarenstein had had your sanction, I should have been too'—happy, the Count would have said. He paused a moment—then in a hurried voice he continued, 'But since it is so, I will leave Rhönberg tonight. Here I cannot stay to see, to hear her, every hour.'

‘ Oh you much mistake,’ exclaimed the Duke warmly. ‘ If there is a thing on earth I wish more than another, it is one day to behold my sister Countess of Mansfeldt.’

The Count looked disturbed: he cast an eye full of impatience on the Duke. ‘ What is it then?’ said he——‘ The affections of the Lady Clarenstein—’

‘ Are yet to be bestowed. She loves nothing—not as you mean—but—’

‘ You think, perhaps, that I can have no pretensions there—and indeed I feel so myself, yet—’

‘Pretensions!’ repeated the Duke, ‘you might ask for an Empress and be received.’

The Count stood suspended. He did not understand the Duke. ‘My noble friend,’ cried he at length, ‘you must explain yourself. If you sanction my hopes, if the Lady Clarenstein’s affections are unbestowed, what is it you fear?’

‘That the noblest heart in the world should become, like St. Julien’s, the victim of passion.’

The Count started. His countenance fell. ‘Now I do understand you, and in truth such a fate would suit me ill—but why augur so ill of—’

‘ Because I know my sister’s character, which you do not.’

‘ I will throw myself on her generosity. I will trust her.’

‘ In all else but where her darling passion is concerned, you might with safety trust her.’

‘ Her darling passion!’

‘ Aye, the master passion of her soul, *power*.’

‘ I will answer with my life that she will not abuse it.’

‘ So confident was perhaps St. Julien.’

‘ He was not beloved.’

‘ And are you certain that you will touch that heart which so many have failed—I am perhaps too cautious, but I should grieve to see my noble friend the passive minion of a lady’s capricious law.’

‘ And, by heaven, it would please me as ill.’

‘ You are, however, by the very nobleness of your nature, in some danger of becoming it. There is a frank simplicity about you which invites the exercise of insidious arts. It would be rich pastime to take that generous heart into hand, and make it live and die by turns as it suits the sovereign lady’s will.’

‘ I cannot think that beneath that throne of beauty exists a heart so destitute of feeling, and indeed I almost doubt St. Julien’s tale ; so rich in all feminine grace and honor does she appear to me. She does not seem to me to think of power ; there is even a neglect of it.’

‘ Because she is assured that when she pleases she can make it be felt.’

‘ But I see no undue exercise of it,’ said Lord Mansfeldt.

‘ Here are no objects to call it forth. No one disputes it. You are taken in the toil, and here there are no rivals.’

The Duke then with delicacy, but with force, laid before the eyes of the Count all that he feared for his peace, on becoming the avowed pretender to the favor of the young Countess. To which the Count with a generous warmth replied, that such capricious conduct might in her, proceed from a heart unmoved as yet: that to the man she loved, her conduct would be widely different.

‘ Then,’ cried the Duke warmly, ‘ be not precipitate. Observe what impression you make on that insensible heart. Mark her every word, look.’

‘ I understand you. But that by heaven I will not do.’

‘ Then go and declare yourself, and be treated like the rest. Rashness and confidence are not generosity. Are you certain to be favored beyond a hundred others? I see nothing hitherto in Rosamund’s manner to you, that passes beyond the sentiment of respect and bienveillance that you must always inspire. *Pas un seul trait de préférence, mon cher Général.*’

The Count sighed, and assented to what the Duke had said. It seemed to have weight with him also. He was no coxcomb. And he did really think, what no one else thought, that he might be rejected even though he should lay his noble name, and his still more noble heart, at the feet of the first lady in the kingdom. The Duke pressed warmly on him his request that he would for a time defer the declaration of his sentiments,

to Lady Clarenstein. ‘ For my sake, and hers, no less than for your own, I ask it, Raymond ; for if I were to see that Rosamund plays you false, it will cause between her and myself an alienation.’

‘ That willingly,’ interrupted the Count, ‘ I will never do. Though against my will, I consent to what your caution requires of me.’

The Duke embraced his friend, and expressed an ardent wish that every thing might tend auspiciously to his wishes.

‘ I know,’ cried he gaily, ‘ that you are the finest General in the world for taking towns, but I do suspect that you know nothing of taking a lady’s heart by stratagem.’

‘ I abhor all stratagems. They can only honorably be used when the enemy practises them against us.’

‘ I only ask you to remain passive, and watch the enemy’s motions. Would you surrender at discretion, and give the enemy *carte blanche* to impose what conditions he pleases ?’

‘ I do not exactly see,’ said the Count half-vexed, ‘ why the Lady Rosamund is to be designated under the masculine semblance of an enemy, armed from head to foot like an Amazon. I have no idea of treating friends like enemies.’

‘ “ Friends !” it is not of friends we were speaking. We were speaking of lovers. I wish

that you may never have cause to know that friends and lovers are a distinct species.'

' Duke, you are the " raven " that croaks the fatal entrance of Mansfeldt beneath this roof. But were there ten thousand perched on your battlements, they should not scare the eagle from the dove.'

' The eagle will be taken in the net, and the dove will sit by, and delight to see him fluttering his royal pinions in vain.'

' I do not like such prophecies. I leave you. If I stay here, I shall be made to think that love is like Lucifer, full of all subtleties and deceits; and Lady Rosamund's heavenly eyes like Medusa's

of such horrid power as to turn the heart to stone; or like a basilisk, to strike me dead.'

'In your enumeration of beautiful-eyed monsters,' cried the Duke, 'do not pray forget the rattle-snake. If you should escape being turned to marble, or struck dead, you may still run the risk of being fascinated.'

CHAPTER THE TENTH.

THE Duke imparted to Hermione the preceding conversation, and the result of it ; which as soon as she heard, she exclaimed, ‘ Ah, that is treacherous, very treacherous : I like it not.’

‘ I had hoped that you would be in this our faithful *ally*.’

‘ *Spy*, you mean. No, my good lord : you will have no secret intelligence from me. Your

sex is powerful enough as it is. I have too much esprit de corps in me de vouloir aplanir vos difficultés. There are already too few in your way.'

'Tell me, my sweet Duchess, what does Rosamund say of the Count? Come, come, unseal those lips. Are not your thoughts, mine? Does not every thing that you feel and know, belong to me as lord paramount?'

'Ah yes,' said the Duchess laughing, 'and for that reason I will keep all that I know safe locked in my breast.'

'Nay, but my sweet lady, you *shall* tell me.'

The Duchess softly repeated the word '*shall*.'

‘ I promise you to take no advantage of it,’
went on the Duke.

‘ I will so far trust you: for nothing can come
of nothing.’

‘ Do you mean to imply that you know nothing
of Rosamund’s sentiments?’

‘ I do.’

‘ She never expressed herself to you in any
way concerning him? Come, my Lady Duchess,
I know that you have her confidence.’

‘ And you ask me to betray it? False lord!
But without participating in your treachery, I can
with truth say, that I have nothing to declare.

Lady Rosamund, never since the evening of the General's arrival, has expressed herself, in any manner, of importance to you to know. What she said of him then, I told you at the time. Her self-love and her delicacy were wounded by his very extraordinary behavior.'

'She seems now to wish his good opinion.'

'I think 'tis more to ingratiate herself with you.'

'What has she done with her coquetry?'

'Left it at Vienna. Where we shall take it up again on our return.'

'Aye, that's what I fear. Do you think that she is capable of love? A coquette seldom is.'

‘ If she ever does love, it will be the destiny of her life. Certainly her heart is as yet *caché sous une écorce si épaisse*.’

‘ I hope with all my heart, that the Count may break it.’

‘ A most fraternal wish indeed.’

‘ I meant the *écorce*, Duchess. So you persist in denying the Count and me your powers?’

The Duchess nodded.

‘ Then, my Lady Duchess,’ said the Duke, ‘ you will have the goodness to be a *neutral* power: for I swear by that saucy smile sparkling in your eye at this moment, if I see you give the

slightest intimation to Rosamund, be it a look, a hint only, I will—'

'Am I threatened? But be calm. I will keep your secret, false Lord.'

'Swear then.'

'By what?'

'By the thing in the world that you love best.'

'I do not recollect what that is. I love every thing and every body.'

'And all alike, I suppose. O rare benevolence! Since when is my Lady Duchess become such a philanthropist? Come, I will refresh your

memory. This is the oath. Swear by Philippe Charles Constantine, Duke of Rhonberg, that you will not betray the conspiracy.'

'In that name I will swear any thing, albeit I like not such disloyal proceedings against the imperial rose.'

But in spite of the pointed raillery which the Duchess was pleased to cast on what she termed a disloyal league, the Duke was justified in his extreme apprehension of the influence his sister's reigning defect of character might produce on a heart so open, so generous, so credulous, from inexperience, as that of the Count Mansfeldt: and it seemed to him no less a point of feeling than one of honor, to guard the happiness of the friend his soul had selected, 'ever since she

became mistress of her choice,' from being injured by any individual with whom he was connected by blood.

Some days elapsed, during which every look and gesture and expression of the Lady Rosamund was scrutinised by her brother's watchful observation : but her tranquil air, her unrestrained conversation perplexed him.

' There is no love,' thought he, ' where there is so much *aisance de cœur*.' The Duke sought in vain for that smile, beautiful in disdain, which always enthroned itself on her lips in the presence of her lovers. She saw and allowed the impassioned demeanor of the Count, but that was all. She neither seemed to regard it, *avec le ton du grand sentiment*, nor du *ton subtil de la coquet-*

terie. Is then, thought the Duke, her heart so insensible, that love cannot touch it even under the noble form of Mansfeldt, assisted as it is in him, by all the seduction of genius, reputation and virtues, which wear the softened air of graces, rather than the cold austerity of principle, little attractive to a reigning beauty.

The Duke was irresolute : the Count unhappy. The Duchess listened with courtesy to his complaints, and kept with even provoking scrupulosity the Duke's injunction of neutrality.

But love has strange disguises: never is he more dangerous than when he insinuates himself into the heart through the medium of feelings but remotely connected with passion. Now it was thus, that love had crept into the heart of the

young Countess, and daily more firmly established itself there, all unknown to her. He came disguised under that respect and admiration of the Count's great character, which it was impossible to deny him, and which was even honorable to feel ; for who does not adore virtue, enthusiasm, and the powers of a noble mind ? It came disguised under the feeling so natural, that made her desire to be approved by a mind so noble, and to erase from it all tincture of that prejudice which St. Julien's relation had sown there.

This desire, so natural and so laudable, accompanied as it was by doubt whether or not he had ceased to regard her as a cold and heartless coquette, gave to all her manner a shade of softened deference that was infinitely bewitching to the Count. If she addressed him, her form

gently inclined itself, as one does towards a superior; if he supported by his own eloquence any sentiment she expressed, her dark eyes sought the ground, and a natural smile played on her lips beautiful in its modest pride.

But these were signs of inward respect and reverence, not the timid graces of new-born love. *They* were all found in the person of the Count, the rising color, the brightening eye, the involuntary sigh suppressed, the murmured indistinct impassioned applause. But on her fair cheek no roseate color enriched its tints, no sigh half-breathed fluttered the throne of beauty. She was herself unconscious of the nature of her feelings; she enjoyed all the charm of sentiment without its bitterness; she dreamt not, that what now made up the rich enchantment of her existence touched

near on that fatal passion which can give to every joyous feeling an added rapture, or render desolate and arid that which, before its cruel influence was felt, had power to cheer and invigorate the heart. O love, how animated, how tender, how proudly free are thy first hours !

Una lingua non può mai

dire: 'Poi rendi Amor lieta è felice

Le rapid'ore di nostro eta.'

-in amore, all'ora che il cuore è tutto

confuso, e non può più distinguere

on la vita, e la morte, e l'eternità

che si uniscono in un solo istante

che si uniscono in un solo istante

che si uniscono in un solo istante

che si uniscono in un solo istante

che si uniscono in un solo istante

che si uniscono in un solo istante

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

IT was a heavenly morning, when Count Mansfeldt, roused by the first beams of the sun, sprung from a sleepless couch, and went forth to breathe the freshness of the morning air. With folded arms, musing as he went, he pursued the winding course of the river, 'till the sun beaming more powerfully, he struck into a grove of forest trees on his right hand, keeping still the river in view. He pursued the path, indulging without restraint

les reveries de son amour, 'till he came to where the trees more thinly set bordered the broad turfey bank of the river.

A scene of exquisite beauty presented itself to the eye; the deep and placid river rolled silently its waters through groves of beech and lime and various forest trees, whose majestic branches spreading over the stream darkened its wave in pensive beauty. The deer browsed on the green herbage, chequered by the sun-beams. The breeze at intervals crept through the forest in low murmurs. It was such a retreat as Petrarch might have sought.

“ On each steep bank arose an ancient wood,
And vaulted with encountering boughs the flood.

Meanwhile a youth beneath the chequered shade,
Forlorn and pensive on the turf was laid.
A lute, that when he stood, his arm could reach,
Hung on the branch of an umbrageous beech.
And rushing through the strings, at times the blast
Swept melancholy music as it pass'd.
Dim was the radiance of his hollow eye,
And oft his bursting bosom heav'd the sigh.
The tear was on his cheek, his scattered hair
And gestures spoke solicitude and care.
Starting, at length, upon his feet he sprung,
The name of Laura trembled on his tongue,
From the tall beech the shell of rapture drew,
And on the strings his flying fingers threw. „

Love, no less than in the vale of Vaocluse,
reigned here with undivided sway. He wore
indeed a smiling aspect, and every thing breathed
confidence and hope.

The Count for some moments gazed on the fair scene, then passing a clump of thickly tufted trees which crossed his way, he beheld at some distance a tall slender form of beauty. He started. Was it a vision, the artful coinage of his brain to delude and mock his hope? or was it in very truth the sovereign lady, the Imperial Rose? She was standing beneath the shade of two lofty poplars, between which was placed a marble statue of a Faun. On the pedestal of the statue was laid a drawing on which she appeared to be deeply engaged. On the grass beside her, lay her straw hat and gloves. So entirely was she absorbed in her occupation, that she might have been taken for a statue herself, if now and then the breeze folding the muslin of her robe around the fair proportions of her slender form, had not given to it a gentle animation that told she was a living

wonder. She stood with her back to the Count, and her long black hair, braided in two rich braids with purple ribbons, hung below her round and flexible waist. The Count, uncertain whether to proceed or return, stood, for a moment, lost in wonder and sweet delight, when her voice, breaking the air with richest harmony, arrested his steps. She had drawn back a few paces, and regarding the drawing with extreme attention, shading her forehead with a hand of ivory, she said, ‘ C’est bien la figure—il y a même quelque nuance de cette douce majesté, ce feu martial—mais les traits—il faut y retoucher, ils ne sont pas aussi réguliers que les siens—et puis ; ce regard—ce sourire noble et tendre : allons, j’ai bien encore une demie heure.’

‘Of whom does she speak?’ said the Count.
‘Whose portrait is it, that the Lady Clarenstein finishes with such care in this retreat?’

The Count knew that she possessed to a degree of excellence not to be equalled, the talent of design. He had seen several groupes, which, with the carelessness often attendant on genius, she suffered to lie about the rooms for the amusement of the children. The facility with which she drew from nature and imagination, rendered her unsolicitous to preserve what she could so easily renew.

The drawing on which she was now engaged was evidently from imagination. ‘Qui donc a ce regard, ce sourire?’

As this doubt passed in his mind, a little tame fawn came up to her, and pushed gently against her in order to attract her notice. An exclamation of alarm passed her lips. She let fall the pencil, and turning hastily round, the Count saw a rich carnation mantling on her cheek. She stooped to caress the fawn, and laughing said, ‘ Mon Dieu, Babet, comme tu m’as fait battre le cœur ! Je croyois que c’étoit lui—c’eut été une belle scène ! Cher petit, tu as une heureuse incapacité de dire ce que tu vois—tu ne l’instruiras de rien, toi—tu n’iras pas dire à personne qu’on vient ici faire son portrait pendant que tout le monde dort au Château.’

‘ Tout le monde ne dort pas,’ said the Count to himself.

The young Countess resumed her pencil, but Babet was importunate, and his playfulness attracted her attention, so she walked with it to some distance. The Count, uncertain whether to stay or go, followed with his eye the fair form of her whom he adored. He marked her step, so commanding, yet so delicate, and as she sportively played with the fawn, every bending of her figure had a living, rapid, springing grace, that bespoke the exulting vigor of unbroken spirits, and youth gladdening in existence. ‘Exquisite sight,’ exclaimed the Count to himself. ‘She has an air so free, so untamed, so imbued with joy, that she seems not to be a creature of this earth. How beautiful is the proud freedom of her step! Care has never saddened that dark brilliant eye—smiles only have dwelt on that scarlet lip—dejection has not bent that towering head.’

The Count was about to turn his unwilling feet away, when in a thicket hard by, he heard a loud rustling, and presently he saw an old stag dart from it, and with somewhat of a hostile air, plant himself directly in the path of the young Countess. She attempted to wave it off with her hand, but the animal, far from retreating, made a motion with its antlers that caused her to turn back in the path. It followed her. She quickened her pace—it did the same—she stopped—it stopped—she went on, and the stag followed her. ‘*Mon Dieu,*’ said she with some alarm, ‘*que ferai je de cet animal ?*’ The Count heard these words, and he advanced.

‘*Ah Monsieur le Comte,*’ exclaimed she in a tone half-frightened, half-rejoiced. ‘*Vous venez bien à propos dans ce moment—veuillez bien*

mettre en fuite cet animal qui persiste à me poursuivre.’

The Count presently succeeded in turning the fierce animal round; but during that time she had leisure to recollect herself; and when the Count returned to her, she appeared little less uneasy and alarmed than before. With a disconcerted air she cast her eyes towards the statue of the Faun. The Count assured her several times that there was nothing to apprehend from the stag, he having darted into the depths of the forest. He also accounted in a natural manner for his own appearance: but all did not suffice to restore to serenity the countenance of Lady Rosamund. The Count, surprised at the embarrassment so unusual in her manner, doubted whether or not to retire. She said something about the beauty of

the morning, and walked forward a few paces, but when near the statue abruptly turned and retraced her steps, and walked several times backward and forward between the trees, all the time talking in half sentences and disjointed phrases, that evidently betrayed some hidden uneasiness. At length she seemed to take a sudden resolution, observing, that it was growing late, and hastily stepping on before the Count, she took her hat and gloves, and was proceeding, when the Count said, 'Will you let me carry your portfolio for you?'

'No, no,' was the answer, 'she would send Helene for them. It would delay them too much.' The hurried tone in which she spoke greatly surprised the Count. He became certain that she wished to divert his attention from

the drawing which lay on the pedestal; and too delicate even to cast a glance towards it that might have ascertained that which he burned to know, he passed before the statue; when lo! a malicious zephyr, sent by Love himself, at that instant wafted the drawing to his feet. He stooped to restore it to its place, when he felt on his arm the hand of the Countess, and he heard her exclaim, ‘ For heaven’s sake, my lord !’

The Count absolutely started. He stood suspended, gazing on the fair face of the Countess which grew alternately pale and red : from thence his eye fell on the paper. With precipitation she that moment planted her foot upon it, as if she wished to sink it in the earth—in vain—for the Count had recognised the portrait. The thick beating pulses of his heart came and went so fast,

that the heaving of his manly breast betrayed the secret tumult—his eye fastened on the paper as if spell-bound, and such a smile passed over his face!

Now the zephyr, if it had been so inclined, might have spared to the young Countess all this disorder. It might have thrown over the paper the drapery of her robe, but, far from aiding its concealment, it blew with all its gentle force against the finest ancle that eye ever beheld. This was a fresh embarrassment: for whether on the Atalantine foot, or on the paper, the Count's eyes so obstinately fastened, it was equally insupportable. Abashed, confounded, she drew it away; and half-murmuring, '*Mon Dieu, que c'est fâcheux,*' she hastily withdrew.

The Count did not follow her. He spent the morning in the consecrated grove, breathing the air which she had breathed, and treading the path which her feet had pressed. So felt Rinaldo when Armida left him,

‘ A rivedere

Gli affari suoi, le sue magiche carte.’

And not 'till a late hour did he bend back his steps to the castle, where he felt a momentary surprise on beholding the court-yard filled with a gallant retinue; he then recollected that the Prince di Bronti was that day expected at Rhonberg.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

AND now that retirement, which had been for some weeks enjoyed by the noble family with such sweet repose, was interrupted by the unexpected arrival of a foreigner of distinction, to whom the Duke deemed it indispensable to pay the honors of hospitality.

Gentle reader, suffer me to present before your eyes a new character of no less dignity and

importance in this history than that of rival to the Count Mansfeldt.

Casimir, Prince di Bronti, was the representative of an illustrious house in Florence. It is impossible, perhaps, to conceive two characters more strongly contrasted than that of the Prince and General Mansfeldt. If the one presented the assemblage of every thing that is great and beautiful by nature's special and large endowment, so was there in the other, every thing which a high-toned refinement has pronounced to be graceful and distinguished. The person of the one was such as the conceptions of a Michael Angelo would have chosen to clothe in mortal shape a divine power. It was gifted with a grace, lofty and free, with strength to perform high exploits, and the will to dare them. Whereas the

light, and elegantly proportioned figure of the Prince presented the idea of a youthful and effeminate Ganymede. The manners of Lord Mansfeldt rapt the attention, for every action of his had a simplicity in it, that seemed to be the fair and genuine expression of inward greatness of soul. The tones of his voice breathed benignity and power. The glance of his eye compelled obedience, the very shadow of his arm seemed to promise protection. While in the Prince, on the other hand, were seen all the elegance of courtly breeding, and the gay confidence of aristocratic ease, which is ever graceful and assured, because it is unshackled by the awkward constraint that the uncertainty of pleasing often induces on the air and address of a simple individual. For their minds, they were even more contrasted than their manners. In the depths of his soul, the Count adored the beauteous and sublime. His sensi-

bility was profound; so profound, so inwrought with every passion and feeling of his nature, that it, instinctively as it were, sought concealment, and exercised itself in perpetual subjection, as conscious of its own too great predominance: therefore was it rarely seen to prevail over that pensive serenity of deportment which was become habitual to him. Yet sometimes would his calm and equal eye, as it rested on loveliness and grace, betray, by its suppressed fire, the sensibility of his nature. Then the 'form of pleasure smiling at his heart' would, for a moment, hold sweetly entranced those austere virtues which governed that noble soul. But not so the Prince. He had ardent passions: he was eager and impressible: he spoke the language of *sentiment*, but he had no *sensibility*. He adored beauty and perfection, but only as they contributed to adorn his

earthly paradise. Art, not nature, had been his school : consequently his taste was often false, and mixed with much of the foreign ornament invented by a factitious elegance.

Though born in an Italian climate, accustomed to behold those fine forms of art and nature which illustrate that country, yet never did the light of genius, or the fire of enthusiasm so penetrate his soul as to sublime his taste. His was a false fire, which dazzled, but gave no heat. Nay, so false and perverted was his mind, that truth and order, and that noble simplicity which form the groundwork of beauty, whether moral or material, seemed to him a fable. They even served oftentimes for the theme of his ignoble derision ; for he had a strong tincture of malice in his nature, and bating what in his secret thought he could not

but reverence, he thought to revenge himself by casting a ridicule on the finest qualities of our nature.—In his character there was a strange mixture of fierceness and indolence, of violence and effeminate delicacy. He would pursue with extreme ardor the object of his fancy or of his ambition, and when acquired, he scarcely in enjoyment, seemed to feel a joy. For experience of every delight had robbed delight of all its freshness ; and induced a satiety and restlessness of feeling which embittered his gayest hours. Every thing was by turns with him enchanting and intolerable.

To the Count, the magic voice of pleasure was scarcely known. He esteemed it to be the glory of his manhood to benefit his fellow creatures by the active exertion of his talents. He had such

an ardor for true glory, that no sacrifice for the service of his country seemed too great for him to make. His heart was the seat of benevolence. Adversity, not pleasure, had been the governing power of his early years. She had taught him to know himself, and to respect the rights of every class of men. But Prince Casimir was a dainty, delicate Prince, who esteemed all exertion of personal activity in the service of any one, as an unprincely degradation. He entertained a sovereign contempt for what he termed the people, and regarded them as machines born and fitted expressly for the service of himself and all other Princes. Yet did his aristocratic pride well become him; it was so delicately tempered by his illustrious affability. There was so much grace in his petulance, and so much polish in his impertinence, that he was the idol of that class of

people which he did not deign to consider as of the same class with himself. Add to this he possessed a quality which never fails to intoxicate the imagination of the people, when it is accompanied by personal graces. The Prince was beautiful as Adonis, and brave as Achilles. He had served several campaigns, and had a regiment which for costliness and splendor surpassed any regiment on earth. It was composed of the finest horses, and the finest men, that Italy could produce. Paris himself might not have disdained to lead such a legion of beauty against the Greeks. This regiment was the delight and pride of the Prince. The men of which it was composed performed all their military exercises with the grace and address of dancers. Not a gesture, not a movement was allowed in this regiment that was either common or clumsy, and scarcely

would praise have been given to the most heroic achievement unless it were conducted according to the rules of chivalrous grace.

It has been said already that the Count knew little of the character of women. The Prince, on the contrary, knew them perfectly, and perhaps, in no inferior degree, possessed the talent of turning to his own advantage their weaknesses. He at once worshipped, and despised them. He considered the sacrifice of their peace and their honor as trifles : nay, if the sacrifice were made to him, he thought that the deity to whom it was offered ennobled the offering. The Prince had always a reigning favorite to whom his whole soul was devoted, the object of his flatteries, and the dupe of his professions. Yet it must be said that these honors were paid with a grace sufficient to captivate the imagination of any woman. At the time of his

arrival at Rhonberg he imagined himself to be everlastingly devoted to a Lady of Florence who had, by a recent marriage, condemned him to the torments of a hopeless passion. To alleviate these torments it was, that he had resolved to travel. Already, in consequence of this resolution, he had with a rapidity sufficient to take away, rather than restore, his senses, traversed all Italy and France in vain. The fair Paulina still haunted his imagination; and he came to Rhonberg invested with all the insignia of her power. Her picture was enthroned on his heart. Her hair encircled his arm. Her name evermore hovered on his lips. The gentlemen of his suite, who had the fruitless task of soothing his petulance, and diverting his weariness, blessed the hour that brought them to Rhonberg; for when their master beheld the Countess of Clarenstein,

they saw in his eye a new-born love, and whispered each other ‘Grazia al Ciel, ecco l’infedeltà!’ They were right. From that hour the fair Paulina ceased to reign.

At night, when the Prince retired to rest, he said to a youth who served him as page, ‘What think you of the Countess of Clarenstein?’ ‘E veramente degna d’essere di Bronti Principessa.’ The Prince smiled. ‘I think so too,’ replied he, ‘therefore carry out of my sight this picture, this bracelet, and this casket of letters.’

‘To whom shall I take them?’

‘To whom you please. Take them back, if you will, to their former mistress; or rather go and cast them at the feet of the divine Countess.’

‘As a forerunner of your own approach, my Lord.’

‘Aye, boy——say that I will be there myself to-morrow. Viva, viva l’amore.’

‘E l’incostanza,’ softly pronounced the page as he cast his eye on the picture of Paulina. ‘Eppure e bella, bella assai.’

‘And so she is!’ replied the Prince, looking likewise at the picture. ‘She is fair, and I *have* loved: what more can I do? Is not the air of France and Italy infected with my sighs?’

‘Aye, my Lord, you raised such a tempest with your sighs that it blew your love away.’

‘ There is no resisting the power of love in any shape, and especially not in that of a whirlwind.’

‘ I have heard of love’s zephyrs,’ cried the page, ‘ but Boreas by way of a Cupidon—— However since we were destined to meet with one, I am glad that it has pleased to transport us into so fair a paradise. This castle is the abode of gaiety and pleasure. All the world is happy, and my Lady Duchess’s women are handsome— Would your Highness choose to be read to sleep to night, or shall I take my lute?’

‘ Sing to me, boy, till sleep close my eyes, and bring me the image of the beauteous Rosamund. Open that casement, that I may inhale the breath of the flowers. Remove farther from

me that alabaster lamp. Let the moon cast her fair light upon me.'

'Perhaps the Goddess may take you for Endymion, my Lord.'

'I hope not. I have no taste for Diana. I hate women who are always in the dog-kennel, and tearing out the hearts of wild beasts. No, give me the fair delicate hands of the Countess, which seem made only for stringing pearls and —touching rose-buds.'

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.



ON the evening of the arrival of the Prince at Rhonberg, the Duke observed to Lord Mansfeldt that an excellent opportunity would now offer for his judging of the sentiments entertained of him by the Countess.

‘You know,’ said he, ‘the character of the Prince di Bronti, and what are his pretensions; they are such as to render him no ignoble preten-

der to the attention of a woman, in whose breast resides the love of universal power. Be cautious, be wary, and let no rash avowal of your sentiments obstruct the free play of her disposition. If she coquet with the Prince, her heart is untouched by you. Observe her, and be silent.'

The Count replied not to this counsel. He disliked even that shadow of artifice which the Duke's cautious conduct obliged him to use, and he did not impart to him the incident of that morning, which had for some time intoxicated his soul with the hope that he was beloved, nor did he show him that image of himself which now lay on his heart, and of which, like another Narcissus, he was in danger of becoming enamored.

But far from acting as a spy on the demeanor of Lady Rosamund, far from entertaining any presumptuous hope that she felt for him any thing but a courteous kindness, if for a moment he had dared to indulge his fancy in the rapturous thought of having touched her heart, one single moment of her dear presence served to dispel every fond idea which, in her absence, he had dared to entertain. More doubtful and timid than he had ever been, he scarcely addressed her ; and when he did, his voice betrayed by its uncertain tones, the state of his feelings. He was silent ; and amid the gay circle which surrounded her, did not obtrude himself. The Countess, conscious of the interpretation which might be given to her having sought a retirement in order there to employ her pencil on the image of the Count, did also somewhat studiously avoid occasions of

conversing with, or being near him. A sweet and noble delicacy was the cause of this. The Count understood it as intending to check any high hope, which he might have conceived himself authorised to entertain from having seen her so engaged, and he felt at once unhappy and embarrassed.

On his part the Prince was somewhat piqued to observe the ease almost amounting to indifference, with which the Countess received his insinuating adorations; and insinuating they were, for the Prince possessed the talent of all others the most delicate and rare, of giving to common attentions a shade of enamored meaning sufficiently declared to gain the attention of the object to whom they were addressed, and enough concealed to render them valuable by their delicate mystery, which seemed to say, 'I wish you alone to read

my meaning.' If he spoke to her, there was nothing in the substance of what he said, that might not have equally suited any other woman present. The tone of his voice would suddenly lower itself to an artful expression of passionate admiration and respect. He would, as if by chance, throw into his discourse some phrases of hers, which if, by a glance or smile, she recognised, he would suddenly stop and appear confused, as if he had not intended to repeat them. If he had occasion to present her with any thing, a book, a work-bag, a flower, he did it not with that empressement which merely marks the readiness to oblige, but with such an insinuating, soft, lingering motion, as if his soul dwelt on the delight of being near her, and sought to prolong every part of the service demanded; thus making it no longer a service but a favor which had

happily fallen to his lot, and of which he was resolved to make the most that he could. Of these and a thousand other 'insidiose grazie' the Prince now beheld with astonishment the ill-success. The Duke also observed it, and was astonished. 'Is this real or affected indifference? Is it coquetry?' He decided in his own mind that it was the latter. The Duke was unjust. But being unable to account for the reserve which there existed between his sister and Lord Mansfeldt, he could only attribute the change which he witnessed to a capricious coquetry.

Affairs were in this state, when one morning that the Count had absented himself for several hours, returning about an hour before dinner, he heard, as he passed through the hall, the sound of music from the saloon. He paused to listen.

The air was ravishingly sweet, and never had he heard tones so rich and powerful as those which the fine tenor voice of the Prince produced. It was one of those arie buffe in which the genius of the Italians knows, with exquisite art how, to unite gaiety with passion, and to mingle sounds expressive of a comic petulance with the deep and pensive tones of sentiment.

The Count knew that music was the reigning taste of the illustrious family, and that the young Countess more particularly made it her study and pleasure. Did the noble soldier feel in his heart the sting of jealousy? I know not. But his feet moved involuntarily from the saloon. He cast out of his hand a bunch of beautiful white lilies, and muttering unintelligibly something about her

not deigning to wear them in her white bosom, went to the apartments of the Duchess.

‘May I come in?’ said he as he entered.

The Duchess was writing, she nodded her assent. He threw himself on the sofa with an air of fatigue and said, ‘there is no repose except in this place.’

The tone in which this observation was uttered caused the Duchess to turn her head. ‘You look tired, my Lord? Have you been out all the morning?’ The Count, a little embarrassed, answered ‘Oh no! . . . only there is so much noise in the saloon.’

‘Noise!’ repeated the Duchess.

‘ Music, I mean.’

‘ I thought that you loved music.’

‘ So I do, but’

But not the Prince’s perhaps, thought the Duchess—and smiling with an archness that increased the Count’s confusion, she resumed her pen. Some moments passed in silence which nothing broke but the deep sighs of Lord Mansfeldt. ‘The Duchess was provokingly resolved to take no notice of them. Presently the voice of the Lady Clarenstein, who sang, as she came along the gallery, a few notes of the aria buffa, broke the Count’s reverie.

He started.

‘She is coming here perhaps?’

‘Very possibly,’ replied the Duchess coolly,
‘But is that a reason for your Lordship to depart?’

‘The very sound of her voice electrifies me.
I cannot stay.’

‘Nonsense,’ cried the Duchess laughing.
‘You are worse than a child.’

‘You laugh, Duchess . . . but if you knew
the state of misery in which I have been this
week past.’

‘I know it very well It is misery of
your own contriving; what between your excess

of love, and your excess of cowardice you are nearly out of your senses.'

'Cowardice!' repeated the General. 'I said it my Lord: and pardon me if I think that your conduct deserves any other name. Does not the very sound of her voice put you to flight?'

'You are pleased to divert yourself,' said the Count, in a tone of slight vexation.

'No, I do not *divert* myself with any thing that so provokes me. It is the first time that I ever saw a man avoid and slight the woman that he adores.'

'Avoid———slight! I, madam!'

‘ Pray tell me, have you uttered a word to her since the Prince’s arrival? Did not you give up your place at table to him? And is it not sufficient to make you leave the room if she enters it?’

‘ Do you so interpret signs of . . .?’

‘ Signs,’ continued the Duchess, ‘ of love I suppose you mean Be assured, my Lord, that such signs as these will never win the favor of any woman. They may be very politic; but cool, calculating policy, will never, believe me, do any thing but disgust a generous mind. Are these the means that you employ to please a lady accustomed to all the insinuating flatteries of your sex? Or is it thus

that the Duke has counseled you to conduct yourself towards a lady, whose sweet demeanor toward you on a certain occasion, deserves at least openness and candor from you.' Stung by this reproach the Count was going eagerly to reply, and justify himself from the insolent manège of which the Duchess accused him, when suddenly the door opened, and full on his sight came, like a sun-beam, the beauteous sister of the Duke. She carried in her hand those lilies which the Count had cast away. Seeing the Count there, she bowed her graceful head, and in the sweetest tone in the world asked him, 'if he had been out all the morning?' The Count had not recovered himself sufficiently from the disorder in which the poignant raillery of the Duchess had thrown him. His answer to her enquiry was absolutely unintelligible. Lady Clarenstein, too delicate to

increase the confusion which she observed, turned away her fair eyes, and going up to the Duchess, said, ‘Look at these lilies, Duchess—Are they not beautiful?’

‘Yes they are and of that sort which you admire, Rosamund—where did you get them?’

‘I found them on the table in the hall. I thought that they were yours perhaps. Will you have some of them?’

So saying, she ungloved her delicate hands, and with fingers whiter than the lilies they held, she divided the cluster, and was presenting them to Hermione, when the Count abruptly laid his hand on the flowers, and said, ‘These flowers are mine, I gathered them.’

‘ Did you gather them to wear yourself, my Lord?’ asked the Countess with a smile.

‘ No; I gathered them for’

‘ For the Duchess? And you wish to give them to her yourself? Is that what you mean?’

‘ No, I meant I intended . . . I . .’

‘ It is very difficult to find out what General Mansfeldt means,’ cried the Duchess pointedly; ‘ or if he has any meaning at all . . . Come, my Lord, be a little less mysterious . . . What did you gather the flowers for?’

‘ For Lady Clarenstein,’ said the Count in a low voice.

‘The most extraordinary way of presenting a nosegay that I ever witnessed!’ answered the Duchess.

‘I did not mean to present it,’ said the Count coloring. ‘I thought . . . I fancied . . .’ The Count stopped. Lady Rosamund’s smile vanished, and her countenance assumed a seriousness that went to Lord Mansfeldt’s heart.

‘Not the oracles of old are more incomprehensible than your Lordship’s words and actions. They are past my guessing ; and so I leave you.’

The Duchess hastily quitted the room, and Lady Clarenstein, leaving all the flowers in the Count’s hands, moved towards the door, saying something about its being near dinner time.

‘ You will not take them then ? ’ said the Count, following her, and holding them out.

‘ They were not, as I remember, ever given,’ she replied ; and there was a slight shade of displeasure in her tone : neither did she look at the Count when she spoke, and she slightly put back the lilies.

The Count, disconcerted now more than ever, let them all fall. ‘ I would not,’ continued Lady Rosamund, ‘ disturb the influence of your better reason. No doubt it was that which prevented General Mansfeldt from pursuing his original intention.’

‘ My better reason ! Rather say, my cowardice,—or what is more likely still, my dread of offending you.’

‘ Offending me!’

‘ Yes, because when I gathered those flowers, which I knew you liked, I thought’ Lord Mansfeldt stopped abruptly.

‘ What my Lord?’

‘ That you would perhaps deign to take them with——with more pleasure for my presenting ——but for that thought I am punished,’ added the Count, looking at the flowers at his feet.

Lady Clarenstein stooped. She gathered up all the flowers, and put them in her breast. It was done with a silent grace, and a downcast eye, and an air of the gentlest dignity.

The Count bent his knee. A thousand pulses at his heart so broke the accents of his voice, that nothing but murmurs met her ear. But again, as on a former occasion, she saw, beneath the folds of his sattin vest, the rapid beating of the noble heart which burned to break through restraint and dared not. He raised his dark eyes, gazed on her matchless face, and instantly lowered them.

At length in a voice so low that it was scarcely audible he said, 'I have something to disclose, which night and day bears on my soul with a weight . . . Dearest Lady if you would deign . . . but here I have no courage, and unless you say "declare it" I never . . . ' He rose abruptly, and went some paces from her. 'What is it that General Mansfeldt would say?' asked

the Countess with gentleness. With a sudden transport the Count exclaimed, 'That you have utterly confounded and subdued me . . . carried such a war of passion here, that my soul is no longer mistress of herself! I wonder, I am distracted at the strange disorder I am your servant . . . your slave . . . and I blush at the unconquerable weakness I would be your master, and your Lord, and I tremble at the ambitious thought!'

The Count threw himself at her feet. 'Sink my knee in the earth,' cried he, 'and for the proud words my lips have uttered make some atonement. Countess, these knees never yet bent to woman; these lips never breathed a sigh for woman's favor the first offering of my

soul's desire is yours. . . . I love to madness, to idolatry.'

Lady Clarenstein in a tone of extreme astonishment answered, 'To me is this said? Does Lord Mansfeldt recollect to whom he has thus spoken?'

The Count raised his eye to read in her countenance the meaning of her ambiguous words.

'To me,' continued the Countess, 'whose character inspired such strong aversion that . . .'

'Oh for the dear love of heaven, lady, suffer not the memory of that injurious action to step between me and your precious favor.'

Lady Rosamund was silent.

‘But’ continued the Count, ‘if you will, you may resent it you can make me the veriest wretch on earth greater far than even St. Julien was.’

At that name the Countess started, and a crimson blush came over her cheek. ‘Then if you so fear to trust, renounce me.’

‘Ask me,’ cried the Count vehemently, ‘to renounce heaven and all its joys Thou art my heaven! To gain you I would endure death itself, despair, hate, scorn, any thing at your hands every torment that woman can inflict on man, if so I may ever hope.’

‘ But this is madness, and the very excess of passion,’ cried Lady Clarenstein, breaking from him, ‘ I cannot hear it.’

‘ Nay then I am lost . . . I have been too rash you are offended, Lady Clarenstein.’

‘ Say honored,’ exclaimed the Countess, bending with irresistible grace towards him. ‘ Now pray rise . . . you distress me. . . .’

‘ But from this exquisite gentleness what am I to hope . . . that I am heard with’

‘ Wonder and astonishment, my Lord,’ replied the Countess ‘ even to disbelief . . . nor will I take this for the act of your better reason. It is the influence of those graces which your

partial eye thinks it finds in me, which has, for a moment, overmastered your discretion. I know what once your thoughts were of me, and therefore I will not lightly believe that you can so soon have changed them. I will take no advantage of what those lips have uttered in a transport of passion so sudden; for, your cool reason returned, you will disavow it. Now let me leave you, and rise, I beseech you, from that posture which suits not with you, whose vows paid from the heart, and sanctioned by the judgment, it were honor to an Empress to receive.'

The Count arose. He was disturbed. His eye was fixed on the ground. 'Am I to pay for that rash action with the loss of heaven?' he exclaimed in a suppressed voice, and his breast heaving with something like an indignant feeling.

‘Not believe me not grant faith to my true vows!’

Lady Clarenstein saw that she had wounded the soul of honor.

‘It is so strange, so passing strange’ said she, gently laying her white hand on the Count’s arm, ‘that I cannot think . . . I cannot believe . . .’

The Count made no reply. He carried her hand to his breast she felt the tumultuous beatings. ‘Why, what a war of anger is there!’ said she, as she forcibly disengaged it . . . ‘Full as proud as . . .’ tender she would have said: but a smile, which forced a flood of transport to the Count’s heart, finished the sentence, and she disappeared.

‘Exquisite creature!’ cried the Count, ‘not believe me! May I never hear the shout of victory more, but I will vanquish your disbelief.’

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

THERE was that day a great entertainment given at the Castle. Lady Clarenstein had been so long detained from her toilette, that her lovely person was but half adorned when the Duchess sent to let her know that the company were assembled, but that she would have dinner delayed till she appeared.

‘Give me any thing, Helene,’ said she, ‘and dispatch.’

‘ Madame veut-elle cette étoile de diamans sur le front ? Elle a les yeux si brillans, et de si belles couleurs.’

‘ Tout ce que vous voulez.’

‘ Madame est sortie ce matin ? Elle est fraîche comme une rose.’

‘ Suis-je sortie ~~—~~ oui ~~—~~ non . . mais, Hélène, voyez donc, comme vous êtes lente . . . et je n’ai pas deux momens.’

‘ Madame, je vous assure qu’il y a du tems assez. Monsieur le Duc et le Général, cinq minutes passés, se promenoient sur la Terrasse.’

Lady Clarenstein blushed a little, and turned away her head.

‘ Mon Dieu comme les mains de Madame sont tremblantes ! ’ cried Helene, seeing that the white fingers of her Mistress tried in vain to fasten the rich clasps of diamonds of her white silk corsets.

‘ C’est votre babil éternel qui me confond . . . allons, ai-je tout ce qu’ il me faut ? ’

‘ Voila vos gants, Madame. Voulez vous une écharpe ? ’

‘ Non——suis je bien, Helène ? ’

‘ Madame est charmante. ’

So likewise thought the whole assembly when the folding doors opened, and the young Countess entered. Oh how the Count’s eyes adored her

as she walked up the great saloon with that delicacy of mien which so well became her ! The Duke met her ; lightly touched her hand, and presented her to the circle : one low obeisance made with a grace which even Grassini might have copied, served for her general salutation. She went up to the Duchess and said, ‘ I am very sorry, my dear Duchess, to be so late.’ I do not know how it so chanced that at that moment, her eyes met those of the Count, who stood behind the chair of the Duchess. A beautiful carnation came over her cheek, and passing her hand across her forehead, as one does when slightly embarrassed, she took the chair which was offered by the Duchess. Never did she look so transcendantly lovely. Her high-bred grace, the ease and composure of her movements, which preserved all their polish amid the silence which prevailed a few moments after her entrance, before

fifty people whose eyes were fixed upon her—the tones of her voice which betrayed by their softness a recent emotion but newly suppressed—all these varied graces of demeanor in the Lady of his soul, enraptured the imagination of the Count. He bent over her chair and said, ‘suffer me to sit next you at table.’ She assented. The Prince heard the request, and in a tone of reproach said, ‘What have I done, Illustrissima?’

‘Done my Lord . . . nothing.’

The Prince sullenly retired, muttering something in a low voice about the ‘august melancholy of Monsieur le Général being that day uncommonly animated.’ The Prince had the talent of saying the most impertinent things in the world, with the most cool and composed air possible.

As this was a public day, of course general politeness took place of individual attention. The young Countess, therefore, addressed her conversation to those persons near her. The Count spoke little. Now and then he made an effort to abstract his thoughts from what so utterly absorbed them, but it was a transient effort alone;—for every instant his silent attentions, the smile which brightened his pensive countenance, the gentle bending of his noble figure when he addressed her, nay, even his manner of presenting things to her, all betrayed the secret of his soul,—and the whole province determined that the Duke's beautiful sister was to espouse General Mansfeldt.

There is nothing perhaps more engaging than the temporary cessation of all personal interests in affairs of the heart, which good breeding

requires in a mixed society. From the suppression to which they are compelled, every action, word and gesture, has a tenfold charm ; and there is perhaps nothing more difficult than the art of reconciling with the forms of politeness, the testimonies of partiality, which we wish to convey to the feelings of the beloved object, unobserved by others.

At the table of the Duke of Rhonberg was sure to be found conversation animated and full of gaiety, without being superficial ; and full of sense, without pedantry. What charmed most of all, was, that amenity seemed to prevail in all. The dignity of rank was supported in every point without deriving any of its lustre from forced and artful contrast with the inferiority of others. The Duchess had a mind so highly cul-

tivated, she had such a fund of sense, and such a gaiety of heart, that she embellished with new graces every subject on which she spoke. She found no difficulty in entertaining Ladies with whom she was not in habits of intimacy; for there are standard subjects which speak to the mind and the heart of all well educated persons, though they know nothing of what is done in the great world, or the intrigues of a court. These latter subjects were held back, in order that the self love of others should not be wounded. And so gracefully was the illusion on all sides maintained, that no one felt oppressed by the condescending affability of the great.

After the gentlemen had taken their coffee, the Duchess proposed that they should walk on the lawn. The most animated music resounded from

the grove where the Duke's musicians were placed. At length the Duchess exclaimed on their playing an air of which she was particularly fond, that she should like very much to dance, and the dance was instantly formed. The Prince came up to Lady Clarenstein, and said, 'Will you at least, Illustrissima, be pleased to do me the honor to dance with me?'

'Oh yes,' without the least displeasure, replied Lady Clarenstein, smiling at the petulance of his expression. Then taking off a rich mantle that she wore, she turned to the Count and said with a sweet smile, 'Will you, my Lord, be my servant, and carry this for me?'

The Count bowed with an air that said, 'I will be any thing to you,' and cast the mantle

over his arm. And as with feet uplifted by the air, she bounded over the turf, he slowly followed at a distance down the dance, guarding the heaven of her charms in perfect and secure tranquillity. When the dance was done, they seated themselves, and the Prince now hoped for five minutes to find her disengaged; but he saw the Count hovering near at hand, to seize the moment when he might again approach her. The irritated Prince could no longer endure this: he started up, bowed, and retired; and as he passed one of his gentlemen, he shrugged up his shoulders, and said, ‘ By my soul ’tis of no use. That star on her forehead bodes me no good. The august melancholy carries the day. Now would I give the universe to disturb the insolent composure of those Austrian musta-

choes. By all that's distracting he is going to take her away' . . . continued the Prince, as he saw the action of the Count, who now stood by her side, and laying the mantle on her shoulders, bowed his head, and held out his hand with silent eloquence soliciting hers. She hesitated. 'Grant me one moment . . . gentle Countess . . . I must. I cannot live 'till I am further heard' . . . and so saying he drew her delicate hand within his arm, and they disappeared among the tall trees which bounded the lawn. Onward they went, 'till by degrees the strains of the joyous music died gradually on their retreating steps. The crowded halls, and all the festive pomp which they displayed, disappeared. Love held alone the enchantment of the hour.

Then what a power of eloquence, albeit broken at first and interrupted, burst on the lady's ear ! Vows, where greatness of soul ennobled the accents of impassioned love. The Count seemed to draw the eloquent pleadings of his heart from a deep source of love and joy, implanted by Nature's own hand. His eloquence was the frank expression of natural feelings, but how powerful in its simplicity ! How irresistible in its impassioned tenderness ! There was in it too that pensive cast of expression, which ever characterises deep and intense feeling in a great mind. Every thing which he said bore the stamp of purity and truth, and he seemed irresistibly, as it were, to compel the judgment to honor and accept his vows ; and thus was the bashful shamefacedness with which a tale of love is sometimes heard, overcome by the noble confidence with which he told it.

He spoke of the joyless tenor of his past life—of the difficulties with which his youth had had to contend, and the privations to which he had been obliged to submit—of that tone of character which adversity had induced upon his natural disposition, throwing a shade of thoughtfulness and austerity over the lofty energies of his nature. Then he unveiled the secret recesses of his heart, whither by stern necessity impelled, all the soft affections of his character had fled for refuge and concealment, and a torrent of enthusiasm burst, as if involuntarily, from his lips. He paused. The noble soldier checked the proud exuberance of his feelings. He bowed his head on her hands, and said, that she alone had the power to make that heart happy or miserable for ever.

What could she answer? For the first time in her life the young Countess felt awed by the homage of a heart which solicited her favor. She was silent; for the raillery that she was accustomed to use, would here have been displaced—neither could she answer it with haughty indifference. She felt honored, yet oppressed by the offering of so exalted a love, which soared too high above the courtly tone of gallantry to be answered lightly: and when, as he often did, he laid his hand upon his breast, and said, ‘believe me,’ a gentle inclination of her head gave an instinctive assent to the touching demand.

Thus went they on ’till the Count suddenly stopping, Lady Rosamund raised her eyes and beheld the spot to which he had led her. She saw the statue of the faun, the grove, the river.

A sudden recollection passed across her mind, and to avoid the fire of the Count's smile, she turned from him and seated herself on the marble steps, which supported the statue. The moon was rising behind the high forest on the opposite bank of the river, and her silver light lay in profound repose on the pine-tree tops. At intervals the breeze with rustling sound passed through the tall poplars, beneath which the statue stood. A nightingale, concealed amid their branches, 'poured forth its amorous descant.'

These sounds alone were heard—for the Count had ceased to speak, but the voice of Nature took up the tale of Love. The lady of his soul sat beside him so bewitchingly fair, that she seemed like the ideal coinage of his fancy. There was at times around her a sort of ideal and

romantic grace so unlike the ordinary forms of beauty, that it bewitched the soul with a strange and indefinite delight. Her profile was turned towards him ; and now in the moon's chaste light, it looked like some sculptured image, fair, polished, peaceful. Her dark hair was disordered by the wind, and one rich tress, half unbraided, spread itself over her shoulder. One arm, whiter than the marble on which it lay, was partially enveloped in a mantle of green and gold. The soldier gazed on her proud charms, and trembled at the lofty ambition of his enamored thoughts.

Now the dusk of the evening came on, and, for the first time, the eyes of the Countess dared to rest on the soldier who lay like a lion at her feet. A passing cloud tempered the brightness of the moon, and gave only light sufficient to mark the

outline of his ample and majestic proportions. But what a world of expression was there! He was graving some character on the base of the statue with the point of a dagger, which he always wore in his girdle: and thus employed, the commanding expression of his fine features was all chastened into the pensive cast of unutterable tenderness.

‘What is it you do, my Lord,’ asked the Countess, bending forwards to observe the characters. ‘Is it with an instrument of death that you engrave my name?’

‘’Tis thus I unite the master passions of my soul, glory and love.’

And so saying, having finished the letters, he cast the dagger from him, and kissed them as if he would impress his life into the marble.— ‘Stand there,’ cried he, ‘for ever—and be as imperishable as my soul’s desire! What can I do to honor thee more, oh fair marble, which bore my image on thy base? These lofty bowers, this placid river, how have they haunted me in my dreams since that moment when first my soul was filled with strange aspiring thoughts that pursue me night and day! Now punish me, fair creature, if I were then too bold: for here, to this exquisite spot, I have led you, to do a bolder thing. I come to ask a confirmation of that hope.’

The Count paused. His eye shot a suppressed fire through the dark masses of his hair. ‘Am I,’

cried he, bending his forehead on her knees, ‘am I beloved?’

The noble lady softly replied. ‘Of love and all its varied conflicts, I know but little. Oft indeed have I heard its pains, its wayward fancies related, and sighs have been breathed unheeded in my ear. This heart never yet knew a stronger feeling than that which I bear to my dear brother. But this I will say now to you, that if high respect and honor for your virtues will suffice to answer what you entertain for me of—’

‘Oh no! dearest lady, that will not suffice.’

‘Is not that love?’

‘No, by heaven, that is not love. Can nothing more be felt for Mansfeldt than cold respect, and joyless honor?’

‘These, my lord, are the ground-work of all true and noble love.’

‘And so they are—but there is something dearer still—that is not all which lovers feel.’

Lady Rosamund was silent.

‘Now heaven and you forbid,’ continued the Count, ‘that it should be all; for then I am ensnared indeed.’ The Count looked at her with intense anxiety. ‘What means,’ cried he, ‘this silence? Oh tell me: for I am all untutored as a child in woman’s arts. How shall I interpret

the heavenly calm in those eyes, while they behold before them the tumult of my contending passions? Is this, delicate reserve—is it displeasure—is it secret exultation? Be it what it may, give me the truth, for though it should come like the chill of death on my heart, suspense is more cruel still! Destroy my hopes at once, or nobly say, ‘thou art beloved.’ Silent still—why brightens the lustre of those dark eyes as they rest on me? Why plays on your scarlet lip that insidious smile? Now, by my soul, I could almost think that you enjoyed the suppliant posture, and all the signs of slavery about me! Is it so, proud angel? You smile again—that smile distracts me—I love, I doat to madness. I will serve you for ages for your dear favor: but I am no dainty minion that will fawn, and flatter servilely the thing that I worship—nor would surely your

noble nature exact from a true heart the sacrifice of its honor. Nay Countess, I cannot, I will not be even *your* slave!

‘Proud soldier!’ exclaimed the Countess.

‘No, not proud. Yours all, and ever thus,’ cried the Count, casting himself before her, ‘if so I may ever hope that you will love me. Now speak, my gracious silence! Do pronounce or life or death! Refuse at once my offered vows, or nobly take me by the hand thy lover and thy lord!’

‘Call you this *wooing*, Lord Mansfeldt? ’Tis something like imperious command.’

‘The lion wooes not as the spaniel does. Give me my answer, and my soul’s desire, angel of beauty!’

‘Give me my answer, and my soul’s desire—Why, my lord, you speak as you would do in the field of battle, when you call out to the enemy, ‘Give me the victory,’ and they let you take it. But women are not to be won as you take towns, by the thunder of your voice.’

‘How are women won?’ said Lord Mansfeldt, gazing with impassioned delight on the varying animation of her fine countenance, ‘tell me how?’

‘Some are won by a shadow of greatness; by an air, a grace, something—nothing—they

know not well themselves. But there are others who direct their flight higher, and they—'

'What do they demand?'

'They for their suitor will have one whose name shall make all the world tremble but themselves. From him they will have duty and service. They will have such a one woo whole days for a smile, and rejoice as many more for having gained it. He must do any fantastic thing that suits the sovereign lady's will, and call it honor, delight, pleasure! though it should make him smile in scorn of himself, that his greatness should be forced to act the part of a page in a lady's chamber.'

‘ I will be that page, and call it honor, delight, pleasure ! I will do all that you have said.’

‘ You must do more.’

‘ Say what ?’

‘ You must change that in your nature which I could never love.’

‘ What is it you cannot love, and I will not love it either. For if you love it not, it cannot be worthy to be loved. Fair angel, tell me what you cannot love in me ?’

Lady Rosamund hesitated.

‘Nay, I beseech you,’ cried the Count impatiently. ‘Not like my nature! Why how am I different from all others?’

‘Oh most different!’ exclaimed the Countess, and a roseate color suffused her cheek as she saw that, by the Count’s smile, he did not understand what she said unfavorably to himself.

‘Is it because I love war, and the taking of towns, and the shout of victory?’

‘No, in the truth, my lord, it is not that.’

‘It is not my figure,’ said the Count archly. ‘It is not my profession—is it perhaps my lordly nature that you fear?’ asked the Count gently.

‘No,’ replied Lady Clarenstein, ‘there is not a shade too much of authority in your nature. Whoever commands me shall have the right as well as the power to do it. But I have been taught by the general voice to believe, that you are a man rigid and austere: incapable of attachment—severe to yourself, and unindulgent to others. Now, my lord, I fear this lofty tone of virtue in you, though I honor it with deep respect. Shall I give up my young heart to the dominion of one who would sternly repress all the fresh-springing joys of my youth? I have been free as air! happy as the happiest of women! I could never love one whom I should so much fear.’

A feeling of indignant sorrow swelled the heart of the Count, and he said, ‘Do you think so of me? Do you fear that the heart of the woman

whom I adore would be withered by my unkindness? Am I austere, because cast on the world even in my infancy, without parents, friends, or fortune, I swore to preserve unstained the only treasure that I possessed, my noble name and my sacred honor?—My path was difficult, but it was glorious. I pursued it, and will to the end pursue it, so help me heaven, cost what it may of sacrifice and privation. Am I inaccessible to the voice of pleasure, because I love such refinement in my joys, that I will have them unmixed with any alloy of that bitter remorse which comes from wounded honor? The soul of Mansfeldt cannot indeed be charmed from duty by the false lustre of those gay delights, which lawless natures profane with the name of happiness.

‘Am I incapable of attachment, because heaven denying me the dear and natural ties of blood whereon my heart might rest its affections with security, it has been condemned to a dreary desolation, an absence of all congenial feeling? Injurious aspersions! I am not *beloved*—I know it well—I have seen with secret pain that the lofty tone which adversity has given to my manners inspires in those whom I would fain draw near my heart, nought but cold respect and joyless honor; one dear and noble friend excepted, thy most beloved brother. But if it were true that my soul craved from its fellow creatures no dearer portion of their love, would the pensive cast of thought have already darkened my youthful brow, would melancholy already have blanched the hue of health on my cheek? Would this heart tremble as it does with strong emotion,

if but an infant's voice speak with fondness the name of Mansfeldt?

‘Noblest of women, deign to judge of me by yourself, and leave these light observers. What can they know of the heart of Mansfeldt? If ever,’ and here the Count’s voice changed to tones less powerful, ‘If ever Nature gave to man a heart intensely alive to all that is lovely and tender in her works, she has given it to me. Is this proud reserve? Is this like cold austerity? Can I say more? Enchantress, speak to me.’

The eyes of the Countess were humid with tears of admiration at this noble address to her feelings, and she said, ‘Rise, thou most noble of heaven’s creation! Keep thy exalted nature

unspotted as it is! What does that princely heart demand of me?

‘ Love,’ answered the Count.

‘ I will not deceive you,’ said the Countess. ‘ Here is my hand. Above all men I honor you. For love—if yet I am to learn it—be thou my heart’s instructor. The way to it is open: gain it, and I am thine!’

The Count replied not. The deep power of joy kept him silent. He raised not his head from her knees; he clasped them, and he trembled.

‘ Is the noblest heart in the world satisfied?’ said the Countess softly. ‘ Have I uttered enough?’

‘ More than my soul can bear. Your words are the balm of heaven, but they kill with joy.’

‘ Mansfeldt!’ exclaimed the Countess, bending her charming head over the prostrate Count. At that name, so uttered, he raised himself. ‘ Beloved of my soul, what is this?—tears! My name breathed in sighs on that scarlet lip! The name, the sigh, are mine; and by heaven my soul will have her right. Take thou the first embrace that I ever gave to woman: take my life with it, my truth, my eternal love!’

If the softened feelings of the Countess suffered the impassioned adoration, yet was it granted with such a sweet austerity, that the Count in admiration of that virgin majesty which thus repressed his boldness, fell at her feet. She arose,

and wrapping around her the mantle of green and gold, she said, ‘ Rise, Count Mansfeldt, and let us return—it is late.’ He obeyed; and they returned through paths chequered by the moon. All the stars of heaven were visible, and shed their good influence on the noble lovers. Alas! one bad inauspicious star there was destined to work them woe. Dearly, in after days, did the Count regret, and with bitter pains deplore, the exquisite delight of that most happy hour!

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.

IT may be imagined how ill the haughty soul of the Prince di Bronti could brook the several mortifications which he had that day received ; and all the succeeding night he revolved in his mind how best he might succeed in blasting the fair promise of the Count's happiness, whom now beyond all doubt he knew to be his rival. He at once feared and hated the Count ; for the tran-

quill dignified politeness with which the Count treated him, seemed to be a haughty assumption of superiority that incensed him greatly. If in conversation the Count expressed his opinion on any subject, the Prince never failed, with infinite politeness, most impertinently to dispute the point with him : nay once, even to rudeness, he supported a contrary opinion in a case of military science with the Count, whose consummate talents rendering him at length too absolutely master of the subject, the Prince reluctantly found himself obliged to give way ; and with an intent to wound the feelings of the General, by insolently adverting to the impoverished fortunes of his family, he with the most provoking affectation of humility, apologised for ‘ having entered into any dispute with him on military affairs, with which undoubtedly as a soldier of fortune the

Count must be better acquainted than he himself could be.'

The Count took no further notice of this intended insult, than to fix on the effeminate Prince his calm eye for one single moment: a look which the Prince never forgave: for it had too much disconcerted him, ever to be forgotten. And now to be supplanted by this soldier of fortune, and with such lofty serenity, such security of success, as marked no fear of him whom all men feared, and all women loved!—it was intolerable! The Prince slept not an hour all night long, and in the morning when he arose, he had full as many caprices and humors as a reigning beauty who is dissatisfied with her morning looks.

‘ How does the illustrious family this morning ?’ said he to the page.

‘ Well; my Lord, as I should think. I met my Lady Duchess and her two sons as I came to your highness’ chamber. She asked me if you were rising ?’

‘ A thousand thanks. Why did she not come herself? She is the prettiest blue-eyed buffa that I ever saw. The sight of her would revive me.’

‘ My Lady Clarenstein too I saw, and with her—’

‘ Il gran Diavolo della guerra, I suppose.’

‘ Whom does your highness mean?’

‘Mean, child! the most puissant thunderbolt of war. The most magnificent piece of august melancholy, Monsieur le Général Count Mansfeldt. He, no doubt, was by her dainty side.’

‘No, my Lord, he was not with her.’

‘Would he were run through the heart with his own sword or with mine—I care not which—Boy, give me my fur pelisse. I am frozen in this climate.’

‘My Lord, it is a scorching heat.’

‘I am in ice I tell you. Oh Italia, bella Italia, what now would I give for one of thy aure soave ed amorose, che spiran amore e gioja!’

‘ Ah mio Prence,’ cried the Page, ‘ non è in Italia, piu diletto, piu belle e care cose, che non trovo io in questo palazzo.’

‘ Be silent, minion, or speak as I do! Vanish and bring me word whether breakfast is ready.’

The Page obeyed; and returning said, that the Duchess was gone into the saloon. The Prince, wrapping himself up in fur and embroidery, as if he had been on the top of his own Appenines, deigned to drag his beautiful person into the apartment: and seating himself by the Duchess, made such comic lamentations on the coldness of the climate, of the ten thousand elegant languors, and princely vaporini, that he suffered, that she found it impossible to forbear laughing at the mixture of effeminacy and fire

which he evinced. He entirely confined his conversation to her, and no otherwise noticed the other members of the illustrious house, than by inclinations of his head signifying his assent to their observations. His sovereign impertinence so hit the fancy of the Duchess, that she indulged him in all his whims for her own amusement: yet did she not fail to observe, that often beneath his dark brows he cast glances full of fierceness at the *gran diavolo della guerra*; a name, given to the great Henry, which the Prince bestowed on the Count.

Breakfast being ended, he threw himself on a satin couch, and implored the Duchess to amuse him. ‘My Prince,’ cried she laughing, ‘I can do nothing for you. I am going to my own apartments.’

‘ Ah, let me come thither, beautiful Duchess.’

‘ Ask the Duke,’ said she laughing.

He did, and the Duke said, ‘ Certainly your Highness is master here, if the Duchess consents.’

‘ Andiamo dunque, Sovrana,’ cried [the Prince.

‘ Why,’ replied the Duchess, ‘ do you seriously think that I will carry to my cabinet such a heap of vapors as your highness is composed of this morning ?’

The Prince let himself fall back on the cushion, exclaiming, ‘ Barbara, in questo stato mi lasciate? Son morto. Son nel inferno.’

‘A thousand thanks for calling the Duke’s castle an inferno.’

‘Senza la presenza tua sarebbe Paradiso un Inferno a me, Nobilissima! Ma parte dunque. Sarai piu tosto di ritorno.’

‘Ah,’ continued he, as his hand fell on a book, ‘Sorte beata! Ecco il caro Tasso. Viene, Armida, e mi consola!’

‘I cannot leave you in fairer company,’ said she, ‘I hope that Armida will disenchant you of the vapors. At two o’clock I shall drive out: if then your highness can leave Armida, and will be my escort, I shall be honored in your company.’

‘A me l’onore e il piacer, Signora.’ The Duchess left the room, and Lady Clarenstein went with her.

The Prince affected to read, but his mind was absorbed by far other thoughts than those which the reading of Tasso suggested. At length he overheard the Duke say in a low voice to the General, ‘I wish very much to have some conversation with you. I know not yet what to think of your rashness. Meet me in half an hour in the grove of oaks at the foot of the south lawn. We shall be private there.’ ‘I will meet you there,’ returned the General. The Duke left the room.

Now the Prince instantly resolved to be there first. He knew the place : and slowly sauntering

out of the room, after first taking a direction opposite to the one in which that part of the grounds lay, in order the better to conceal his treacherous design, he with all possible speed gained the retreat which the Duke had chosen for his private interview with General Mansfeldt. Here he artfully concealed himself, and scarcely had he found safe ambush, when he saw the friends advancing. They came so near to the spot where the Prince stood that he could distinctly overhear every word that they uttered. ‘Here,’ said the Duke, ‘we shall be quite secure of interruption. On a point so interesting, and so important to us to conceal from Rosamund, I scarcely thought myself authorised to speak in the castle: but Dryads and Fauns tell no tales. Now then, Raymond, explain to me why, contrary to all my cautions and my counsels, you have made your-

self, against my will and consent, my brother by alliance, which long you have been by my soul's election.'

I shall not here repeat the conversation which, upon this opening, took place between the Duke and the General. From it the Prince became acquainted with that species of artifice which the prudence of the Duke had prevailed on the Count to permit at least, if not himself to practise, against the heart of the young Countess. A malicious joy filled the breast of the Prince, as instantly all the advantage to be made of such a discovery flashed on his mind. To betray it to the Countess, to exaggerate every point to which he could possibly give the color of a secret and subtle design to make her the dupe of their treacherous manége, to incense her against the Count;

and on her consequent indignation to build his own pretensions, all in a moment presented themselves to his imagination. Scarcely could he subdue the perfidious joy which animated him, 'till the Duke and the General, rising from the turf on which they had seated themselves, bent their steps to a distant part of the grounds beyond the uttermost limit of the grove. Then springing from his retreat, he laughed aloud, 'Now this,' cried he, 'is beyond my hopes. For if I am not the veriest infant in love, she is mine! I will so represent this thing to her, that if she has the soul of a woman she cannot choose but resent it. Now will I have a rich revenge for all the slights that she put upon me yesterday!—I will so gall and vex her spirit, so startle her superb delicacy with certain words that women hate, such as easy dupe, pretty fool, love-sick girl, that

if she frown not——But soft——here she comes, by all that's beautiful, reading ! I'll spoil your studies, proud beauty I'll give you that you shall not easily digest ! . . . How fair she is ! How transcendently fair ! She steps as if the earth were too mean to bear her weight. The youth of Hebe, and the port of Diana ! She comes this way . . . Now for a well feigned disorder. Oh love assist me !

The Prince was too great a master in the art of feigning not to act to the life the disorder, into which, as Lady Clarenstein drew near, he threw himself ; and fearing lest if she observed it, her delicacy should lead her to take another direction he took care to utter loud enough to catch her ear exclamations full of wonder and indignation. ' What ! The peerless Rosamund ! . . . It

is impossible ! Is there a man on earth could use such mean deceit with the noblest lady in the world ? . . . Shame on such arts !

‘ My Lord ! ’ exclaimed the Countess, transfixed with surprise.

The Prince at the sound of her voice affected to start as if he had not seen her approach, and with increased confusion turned out of the path as if with an intent to escape from her presence.

‘ Stay, Prince, ’ cried the Countess, ‘ I beseech you ! . . . What is this disorder ? ’

Again the Prince attempted to fly.

‘Of whom,’ cried the Countess, ‘did you speak?’

‘Speak! . . . of no one.’

‘Pardon me . . . I heard my name. What arts are those which you spoke of? Who is deceived? Who is duped?’

‘Oh my foolish tongue. Now heaven forbid that you should have heard’

‘Enough to rouse all the powers of my soul; and if you do not mean mortally to offend me, you will not depart.’

My stay will much more offend you. . . .

I must retire forgive the disorder that I am in, and forget. . . .’

‘Impossible. . . . My Lord, on the honor of of a gentleman you are bound to satisfy me in this instance.’

The Prince bowed . . looked greatly distressed, and stood before her in silence.

‘And more,’ continued the Countess, ‘you will not refuse to explain the meaning of those strange words which you uttered.’

‘I am no traitor, Madam, nor will I declare it. Indeed, before your face I could not utter such things.’

‘What things?’

‘ Oh, the most incredible, and the most unheard of! which to have heard roused all the indignation of my soul. Suffer me to depart. It does too much concern your peace!’

‘ And you refuse to acquaint me with it?’

‘ Unknown it hurts you not.’

‘ My Lord,’ said the Countess with dignity, ‘ if by those mysterious insinuations you mean but to play on my woman’s curiosity, suffer me to tell you that it is ill done, and you much mistake the Lady with whose feelings you are pleased to make a sport.’

‘ Madam, I could as soon sport with my own

life, as do so bold and injurious a thing as that of which you accuse me.'

'If you would have me think so, my Lord, I beg of you, as a man and a gentleman, no longer to decline the communication, which, as you say, affects my peace.'

Madam, I cannot satisfy you without treacherously betraying those who are dear to you. Would I had been dumb! . . . A curse on my incautious zeal!

'Those who are dear to me. . . . Who are they!'

The Duke, your Brother, and Count Mans-

feldt.' At the last-mentioned name the Prince sighed profoundly, and turned aside his head.

Lady Clarenstein looked steadily at the Prince, and said with calmness ; ' If it were not from a gentleman and a Prince that I heard those words, I should have answered him with silent disdain. From the Duke my Brother, and General Mansfeldt, can come no ill to me. . . . It is some mistake.'

' It is, no doubt, Madam. I think so, and forgive my indiscretion.'

' Ungenerous! nay, unjust to the highest degree. To throw suspicions on a dear Brother, and refuse to confirm, or else dissipate my,

doubts. From whose lips heard you that which you so obstinately conceal from me?’

‘From their own. Not many minutes are passed since they stood conversing on this spot.’

‘My Brother, and the Count! There is nothing singular in that.’

‘Nothing, Madam—they spoke of you.’

‘That is very natural, Prince.’

‘Very natural. It is also very natural that what I heard should astonish me: very natural that in that disorder you should over-hear my words; and very natural that I should refuse to tell what would make you——’

‘What, my Lord?’

‘Miserable, as I should think; if I were a woman, and such a one as yourself. ‘But,’ continued the Prince, suddenly checking himself, ‘perhaps you may already know it. To you they may have confessed their plan——you may have pardoned it. Love will pardon every thing.’

‘Ah!’ cried the Prince, it is so—you know it, and you forgive it. Then pardon me;’ and so saying the Prince bent his knee. The Countess was extremely disordered, and trembled so much that she leaned against a tree for support.

‘Pardon me, I beseech you. My incautious zeal has occasioned me to hurt the delicacy of your feelings.’

‘ Leave me, Sir ; you distract me.’

‘ If,’ continued the Prince with well-feigned regret, ‘ I could, for an instant, have thought, that, with your consent, you had been so ungenerously and ignobly dealt with——duped———,’

Lady Rosamund started as if a serpent had stung her.

‘ I am a stranger,’ continued the Prince, ‘ to the manners of this country, and that must be my excuse——The women of my country are of such nice honor, that they would resent what perhaps would be allowed here. The Italians are proud.’

‘ Not so proud, or of more nice honor than

the Austrians,' exclaimed the Countess haughtily, and instantly recovering all her self-possession, 'but since you refuse to satisfy me, I will learn elsewhere the secret which it imports me to know for my peace's sake. Leave me, my Lord!'

'I would expire to satisfy you in any thing,' cried the Prince vehemently, 'but my own honor is concerned in this; and I am not accustomed,' added he haughtily, 'to do that, which according to the laws of honor is unbecoming in a gentleman; and though led on by an irresistible feeling in my breast to offend against these laws, however lightly, yet I should ill brook the censure which I perhaps deserve. The circumstance which you wish to know, I secretly overheard.'

‘ And it shall ever by me be kept as secretly,’ replied the Countess.

‘ May I depend on your promise, that you never will disclose what you shall learn from me to any human being ?’

‘ You may depend upon it. Now then, my Lord, torture me no longer with this suspense.’

‘ Oh, the noblest Lady in the world!’ exclaimed the Prince in an affected transport of vexation and regret. ‘ What pain it is for me to obey you. For on me your hate will fall. Would I had never heard, or hearing, had better concealed it !’

‘ Know then, Countess, that on your departure and that of the Duchess from the saloon this

morning, to pass away the hours of your absence, I came to this grove, and little caring how I spent the tedious moments, I threw myself at the foot of this beech-tree, and soon by the silence of the place I fell into a slumber. How long I slept I know not, but I was on a sudden wakened by the sound of voices near me. I scarcely heeded this interruption 'till, hearing your name frequently, all my soul was roused to attention.— I stayed—I heard—Let honor, and your gentle self forgive me! The Duke your brother, and Count Mansfeldt, when they reached this turfy glade, paused, and discoursed together most earnestly: the Duke with some heat blaming the Count for the precipitate avowal of his attachment to you. The Count replied to this, that he well knew the ground on which he stood with

you : that he feared nothing : being certain of your favor, and he recounted to the Duke, to prove this beyond all doubt—But pardon me, noble lady, if I forbear to wound your ear with what the Count then said. Never did I from the lips of man hear such bold, audacious confidence of success as fell from him. He made such boasts as true and noble lovers keep in their inmost hearts, and never confide to a friend; told over each heavenly smile, each tender word, nay more———’

The false Prince here cast down his eyes : a glow of indignation suffused the fair face of the Countess. He saw the advantage and proceeded.

‘ The General drew a paper from his breast, and related how on the morning of my arrival

here he had found you intent on this portrait of himself. The Duke on this seemed satisfied, and from their after discourse I gathered that you had been the object of their artful wiles, that the Duke had counseled Lord Mansfeldt not to declare himself to you, 'till he should have good reason to judge that he was beloved by you.'

‘ Oh my false brother!’ exclaimed the Countess.

‘ This counsel,’ continued the Prince, ‘ Lord Mansfeldt had implicitly followed. He and the Duke congratulated themselves much on the success which had crowned their measures; saying, that but for this, your high spirit would never have been subdued, that you would have seen, and abused your power, but that now all would follow that they could wish. To some

things they alluded, that I, from not being acquainted with, but partially understood. The substance, as I conjectured, was some misunderstanding that on the General's first arrival here existed between yourself and him. Am I permitted to repeat all?' asked the artful Prince. Lady Clarenstein bowed her head.

'They then said that you had shown such a sweet grief on that occasion, such a desire to conciliate the Count, that it was not to be resisted, and that he had yielded to your wishes.'

'Insolent falsehood! Who spoke that?'

'The Count, Madam. He said likewise that yesterday he had been thrown entirely off his guard, on your seeming to reproach him with

cold unkindness, and that it was not in the power of man to resist such'—the Prince abruptly paused.

‘Such what? speak, my Lord.’

‘I cannot so offend your nature.’

‘Let me have all—all the shameful story! Though but the lightest word you have spoken is enough. I command you, my Lord, to conceal nothing from me.’

‘To resist such winning intimations of your sentiments,’ continued the Prince.

‘The Count said that? intimations?’

‘ He did, Madam. That was the word. Then in a lower voice he told the Duke something that I did not hear, on which the Duke laughed a little, and the Count in a sudden transport said aloud, that if he were Emperor of three kingdoms, he would give two of them for such another moment.’

‘ Enough, enough!’ exclaimed the Countess.
‘ I have heard what the world shall not.’

‘ Little more passed. The Duke only cautioned Lord Mansfeldt to beware of letting the part which they had acted come to your knowledge, to which the Count gaily answered that you would forgive him.

‘ Never,’ said the Countess calmly.

‘ They then departed—and shortly afterwards, you, Madam, by becoming unwarily a witness of the agitation into which this discovery threw me, have most unhappily obliged me to disclose what I would otherwise have concealed with my life.’

Lady Clarenstein, though sickening with a variety of contending feelings, so far preserved her dignity of demeanor as to express in a few words her thanks to the Prince for what he had done.

‘ If by this I become the object of your displeasure—’ said the Prince.

‘ I am everlastingly indebted to you. I can feel no displeasure where no cause for it exists. Now pray leave me.’

The Prince with sorrow admirably feigned, and deep respect, through whose expression gleamed a softened tenderness, lightly touched her hand with his lips, and hastily departed. 'The deed is done,' said he to himself. 'The arrow has pierced, and the Count is fallen.'

It is almost needless to represent the state of feeling into which this intelligence, so insidiously, and with such detestable art, conveyed to her ear, threw the Countess: for who can imagine that the high-spirited Rosamund could fail to resent with all the pride of her soul the false disloyal proceedings against her. The Duke too, the author and promoter of these designs! Had he so little confidence in her? . . . so little regard of that delicacy which, rather than voluntarily

expose them, should have made him shield the affections of her heart from outrage.

‘ But,’ said she at length, after great and various conflicting emotions, ‘ if they have so ungenerously played upon me, we will see who is the deepest player at such a game! I am not so bewitched with the love of this false Lord, but that I can contrive a plot which will startle them. I know that I am beloved. I have power and I will use it aye, cost it what it may! I will have such revenge as will satisfy me even to the very utmost point of what I can inflict Secure of me! Fix the inconstant moon . . . catch the breeze as it flies . . . or grasp at some bright star and think to hold it! . . . it were as easy as to be secure of my heart! I can give and take away . . . love and not

love . . . delude with hope, and kill with scorn . . . do any thing sooner than any man on earth shall dare to say "I am secure." If even in the noble breast of the Count, such mean arts can exist, who shall now be trusted?' A few tears of wounded feeling started into the eyes of the Countess, which she dashed hastily away, and went out of the grove with far other thoughts than those with which she had entered it.

Now as the young Countess, in haste to gain her chamber, passed through an open corridor of the castle, the Count, walking on the terrace below, saw her as she passed, and springing up the steps, he was by her side. Her disordered air struck him with surprise.

‘ What means this haste,’ he cried.

‘ Pray let me pass, my Lord—I am somewhat tired with walking.’

‘ But you look distressed—and why are the loveliest eyes in the world averted from me? Have I done any thing?’

‘ Oh no ! I am only fatigued with the heat.’

‘ This sweet hand,’ cried the Count, drawing off her glove, and clasping it, ‘ has not been mine to-day : let me go with you to your apartments.’

The Countess murmured something unintelligible, and tried to disengage her hand.

‘What can thus have fluttered that sweet temper?’ said the Count tenderly. ‘Tell me what it is!’ and he gently drew her nearer to him.

‘Nothing, my Lord, has fluttered me.’

‘Nothing—and your eyes are full of tears, and your hand trembles!’

‘I met a serpent in my path; and I thought that it would have stung me.’

The Count smiled incredulously. ‘But as it did not sting you—Tell me, however, where this serpent is, and I will hunt him out. By all that’s strange, I believe that I am myself the serpent, from the terror which you seem to have of me,’ cried the Count, letting go her hand.

The Countess cast a glance at him full of indignant expression ; when suddenly recollecting herself, she laughed, and affected to rally her own humor which she attributed to fatigue. ‘ What are you going to do, my Lord, this morning ?’

‘ I *was* going to ride—but if you would let me stay with you—’

‘ You will have a charming ride—and here are your horses.’

The Count said reproachfully, ‘ My sweet Lady is in such great care of my going, that since she will have it so, I will not longer make her desire my absence.’ So saying, he ran down the steps. Now it was not the intention of the Countess that she should appear offended, or un-

kind to Lord Mansfeldt: so she did not retire, but drew near the balustrades, and stayed to see him mount. He wreathed his hand in his horse's mane, and vaulted into his seat. The animal seemed to know the touch of his hand, as he stroked his neck, and caressed him. He reared and bounded beneath the weight which he loved to feel. While the Count, with chivalrous grace, sat erect and firm, and tried the ardor of the animal in which he seemed to take pleasure, 'Stand,' cried he, 'stand, Tartar—proud fool—come—come, my brave fellow, be quiet.'

'He is very beautiful,' said the Countess.

'Yes, he is the finest fellow that ever I saw,' said the Count with animation. 'He knows me,

and the sound of my voice, and the touch of my hand.'

'He minds no one else, my Lord,' said the groom, as he fixed the stirrup at his master's foot, 'I'll say that for him, that he is the most plaguy animal that ever I had to manage.'

'You don't go the right way about it. I never see any thing of this sort of behavior.'

'No, my Lord; because when you come in, he stands as quiet as a lamb; and the moment that you go out of the stable he begins capering and playing over all his tricks again, as if his feet were not made to stand on the ground like other horses.'

The Countess smiled. 'My Lord,' said she, 'here are your gloves which you have left.'

The Count took them, and for a moment detained the beautiful hand which held them. 'I cannot think,' said he in a low voice, 'what it is that disturbs the lady of my soul. I do believe that it is my august melancholy, as the Prince calls it, that infects you.'

'You will come back soon, my Lord?'

'I only go because you will have it so,' said the Count, half dismounting.

'No, no,' cried the Countess, 'you must go now, and if you wish to see me when you return, you may come to my cabinet.'

‘ I will ride round the world in half an hour with that sweet hope at the end of my journey.’ At these words he lifted the hat from his head, put his horse into a gallop, and disappeared.

‘ No,’ said the Countess, looking after him, ‘ it is impossible. That soul of honor, evermore breaking like the sun through the clouds, can never practise arts so ungenerous.’

But when Lady Rosamund gained her chamber, no longer impressed by his presence, all her resentment returned. Every thing that the Count had just said to her in his tenderness, now seemed in her eyes so many traits of confidence in her favor. She sickened—she turned pale—she glowed with resentment. She became more calm, and she fell into a deep study of the plan which

she meant to pursue ; and having resolved on the first step that she should take, she composed her heavenly face into smiles, and called up every grace, every charm which she possessed, every dormant talent of fascination of which she was so great a mistress.

The Count had seen her only adorned by her native graces, simple, unsolicitous of conquest, neglectful of all art. But now the picture was to be changed, and he was to behold every charm rendered more penetrating and subtle by her nice conduct of coquetry. True and noble love speaks to the soul—it is without design ; it elevates while it enraptures—but coquetry studies the art of managing the passions, and establishes its influence on the imagination.

Now farewell the sweet and genuine expressions of the heart ! Farewell each natural and simple grace ! smiles where no art is, and looks which speak the meaning of the soul !

Scarcely were all her powers assembled round her, when she heard the rapid step of the Count on the great stair-case. The door opened, and the soldier entered, panting from the enamored haste with which he came. A subdued rosy light filled the gay cabinet, a soft perfumed air wafted the silken curtains, a voice that sounded like an angel's speech, saluted his ear, a form half reclined on a Turkish couch gently raised itself, and a hand like ivory was extended. The Count paused ; his rapid step, his high-spirited movements, were suddenly, as if by enchantment, subdued.

‘Come here, my dear Lord,’ said the heavenly voice. ‘Sit here by me. Have you had a pleasant ride? Why you are covered with dust?’

The Count gazed on her in silence.

‘Are you speechless with the speed at which you came,’ said she with an arch smile. ‘I want to tell you that I am sorry to have been so apparently ill-humored to you just now. Something had disturbed me—shake hands—let us be friends.’

‘Lady of my soul!’ cried the Count, ‘apologies to me!’

‘Come, tell me, what saw you in your ride,’ said the Countess, taking up her embroidered

handkerchief, which she was on the point of completing, and which she had destined for the Duke, it being at that time the fashion for men to wear them tied round the throat. It was on a crimson ground, and flowered in a rich pattern. She was putting on the last shade of the last flower.

‘What I saw in my ride?’ said the Count, watching intently her graceful fingers as they moved. ‘That rose-bud seems to be colored with the ends of your fingers.’

‘I asked you what you saw in your ride,’ repeated the Countess, smiling.

‘Oh nothing. My horse and myself were very near being trampled under the Duchess’s

barouche. Tartar galloped full in between the front horses. I hope that the Duchess was not much frightened. She laughed, and asked me if I rode with my eyes shut. Lady of my soul,' continued the Count, 'you promised,—when will you love me as you promised?'

'Oh, you must have patience. Come, woo me now, I am in the humor. You said that you would be my heart's instructor. Now let me hear what you can say.'

'I love,' said the Count.

'That is wooing like a Spartan, my Lord. In what degree and fashion. How do you love me?'

'With adorations and with fertile tears,
With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire.'

‘ Oh, that is poetic love !’

‘ You would not be loved in dull prose ?’

‘ No, for that is loving like the Englishmen.’

‘ Will you be loved as Frenchmen love ?’

‘ That is as much too lightly, as the other is too heavy.’

‘ As the Italians then ?’

‘ I do not know how the Italians woo.’

‘ The Prince fain would show you.’

‘ I like not the master.’

‘ My sweet Lady, you must let me woo in my own fashion.’

‘ Well then, declare it.’

‘ I will love you like a man and a gentleman.’

‘ A fair promise, if you keep it. It is the first lesson, my Lord. It is just finished in time, for here is Helene.’

‘ Madame veut elle faire sa toilette ? Il est trois heures passées.’

‘ I will come immediately,’ replied the Countess.

‘ Ah not immediately, I have a thousand things to say,’ cried the Count ; ‘ besides, I can serve you instead of Helene. I can braid that beautiful hair, I can twist the strings of pearl round those arms, I could tie a ribbon round that slender waist, and I could put on those small satin slippers which you wear, and clasp the emerald clasps. Try me, sweet Countess : I beseech you, leave me not. Nay, smile not in that way, you madden my reason.’

‘ Aye,’ thought the Countess, ‘ you shall be maddened with something else than joy.’

Now as she arose to depart, she took the handkerchief which she had just finished, and with the softness and grace of an angel, she presented it to the Count, and said, ‘ I think that

you have not one of these. Will you wear this? Do you know what to do with a lady's gift?

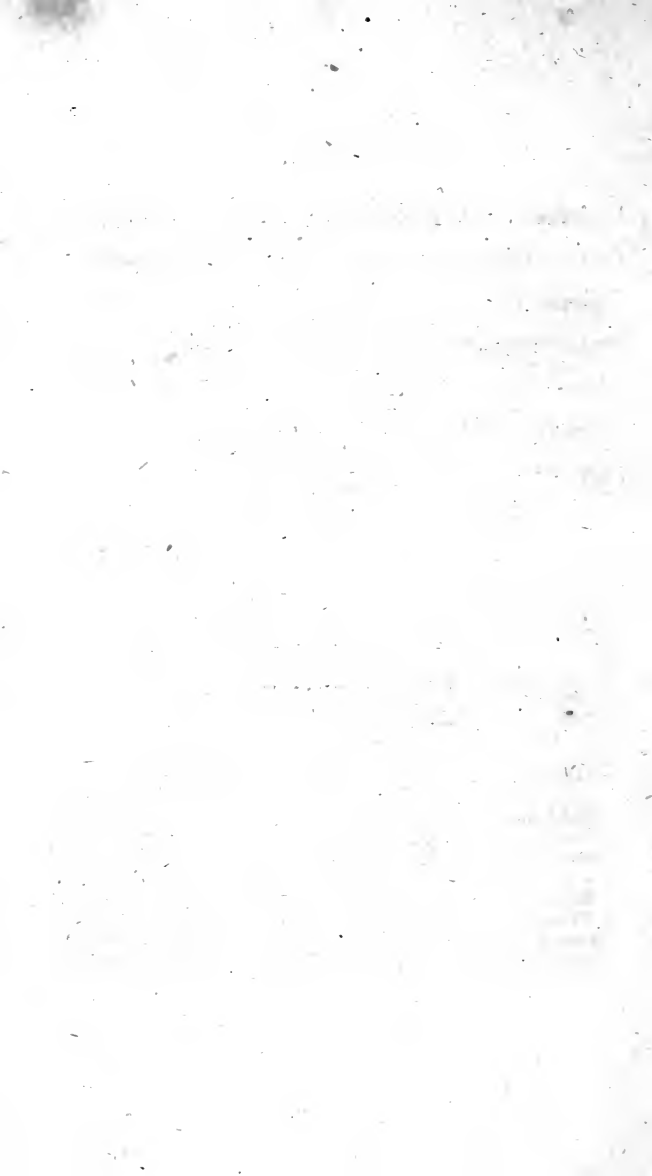
The enamored Count kissed the handkerchief a thousand times, and said to himself, though loud enough for the Countess to hear, as she passed into her chamber, 'So would I, if I durst, the hand that gives it.'

'Aye,' said she exultingly to herself, 'but ere that hand is yours, your heart shall break with hard service. You have dared to do the most insolent and audacious thing that ever man did, and you shall learn to love as I please. For every bold word that you have uttered, I will have a separate torment, but not yet. The poison is not yet potent enough. But I know thee, Mansfeldt: Thou hast the heart of a child in simplicity and

tenderness. Clarenstein shall throb in every vein, and then—why then take at my hands what I please to give. For cost what it may, I will have vengeance; yes, though it cost me thyself.’

So spake the bad Angel, and his words were prophetic.

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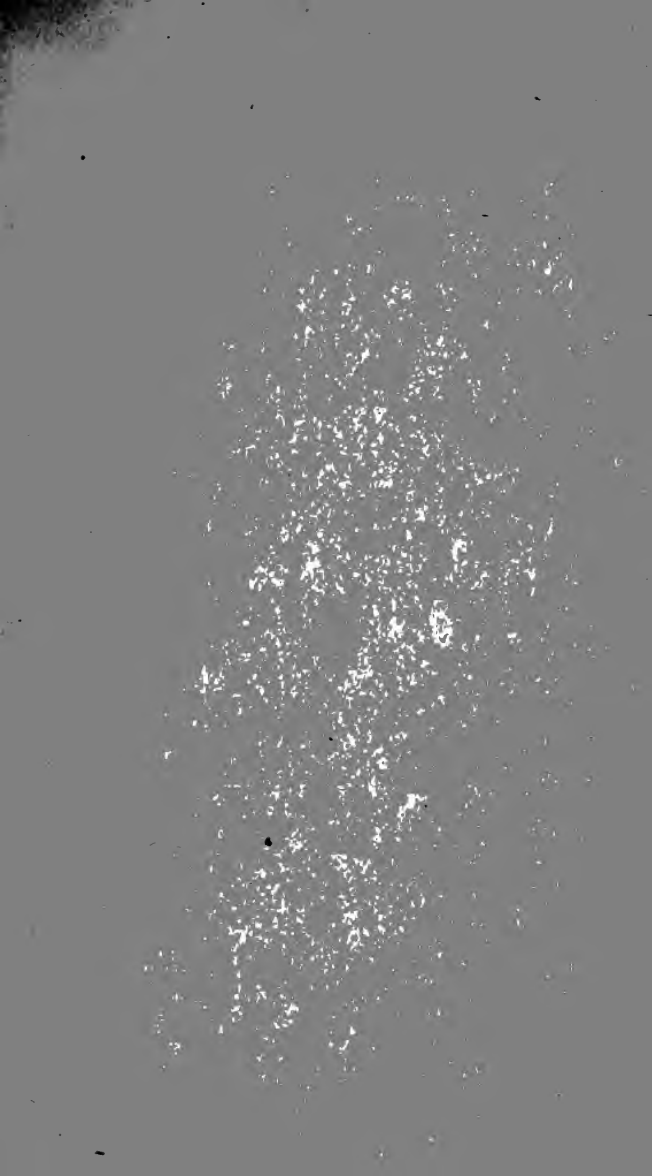
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